EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

GEOFF LEES

F1 wouldn't reward his talent, so he became big in Japan – now he tackles MN readers' questions

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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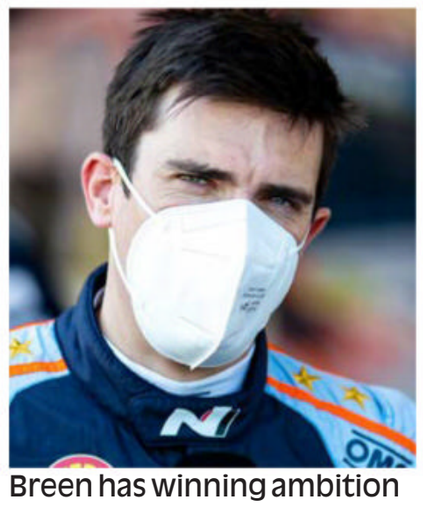
Dry conditions to ease Irishman's road order worries on Belgian WRC counter

WEATHER BOOST AS BREEN GOES FOR YPRES DOUBLE

Hyundai man aims to fly high on Ypres challenge



Breen has winning ambition

By Graham Lister

Craig Breen's bid for back-to-back Ypres Rally wins has been handed a helping hand by the Belgian weather.

Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle are due to start seventh on the road when the World Rally Championship event gets underway tomorrow (Friday).

As Motorsport News closed for press, weather forecasts were for warm and mainly dry conditions, which will make a significant difference for the Irish crew.

They won on Ypres in 2019 prior to the event's WRC elevation and know the pitfalls of starting further down the order due to the amount of mud and other debris that gets dragged onto the road by drivers taking 'cuts' through corners, a problem that's multiplied when it rains. Although their Friday road order is still not favourable, a dry event gives them hope.

"It's one of the most specialised rallies you'll do, an amazing challenge," said the Hyundai driver.

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REPORT

RAM HOME THE ADVANTAGE – MERC TAKES OVERDUE WIN

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FEATURE

UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF KNOCKHILL

Tin-top heroes debunk the myths p30

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COMMENT

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Max Verstappen has got ground to make up in the challenge for this season's trophy

AN F1 SEASON LIKE NO OTHER

As the fight for the Formula 1 season nears its halfway point, it is an excellent time to reflect on the high-drama battles that have already taken place and James Roberts runs the rule over all 10 teams in this week's issue.

The hard yards over the opening 11 of the 23 rounds have produced a tumultuous firework of a campaign, and there is something unusual happening. Mercedes is not having things its own way and, despite the fact that Lewis Hamilton is on top of the World championship standings, it is clear that he has going to have to summon all of his skills to hold on to his advantage.

Red Bull has got its mojo back, and Max Verstappen is showing all the skills that marked him out as a future World champion from the very beginning of his career. This is going to be a proper slugfest for the remainder of the campaign and whoever emerges victorious will know they have really earned the crown. It is what Formula 1 should be about. James Roberts' insight starts on page 27.

The struggle for this season's World Rally Championship glory is not quite as tense, with benchmark Sebastien Ogier enjoying a healthy 37-point buffer at the top of the table over his Toyota Gazoo Racing team-mate Elfyn Evans. In this issue, we take an in depth look at the tests that will face the WRC crews this weekend as the Ypres Rally makes the step up to become a top-flight points-paying round. Nick Garton examines the event on page 16.

Also in this issue, Geoff Lees takes centre stage in out readers' Q&A. The Formula 2 champion seemed destined for great things, but the chances never quite fell his way – although he enjoyed a long and successful career in the Far East and in the sportscar arena. His answers are a real insight.

We round up all the national racing from last weekend, including the two British GT sprint races from Snetterton. Those who attended the meeting in Norfolk did so with a heavy heart as news came through last weekend of the passing of its former race director Bernard Cottrell, a man well known to many in the paddock. Bernard was one of this sport's great enthusiasts and motivators. He made things happen and had a passion for motor racing unlike most others. But above it all, he was a genuinely decent bloke and will be missed by so many.

Matt James
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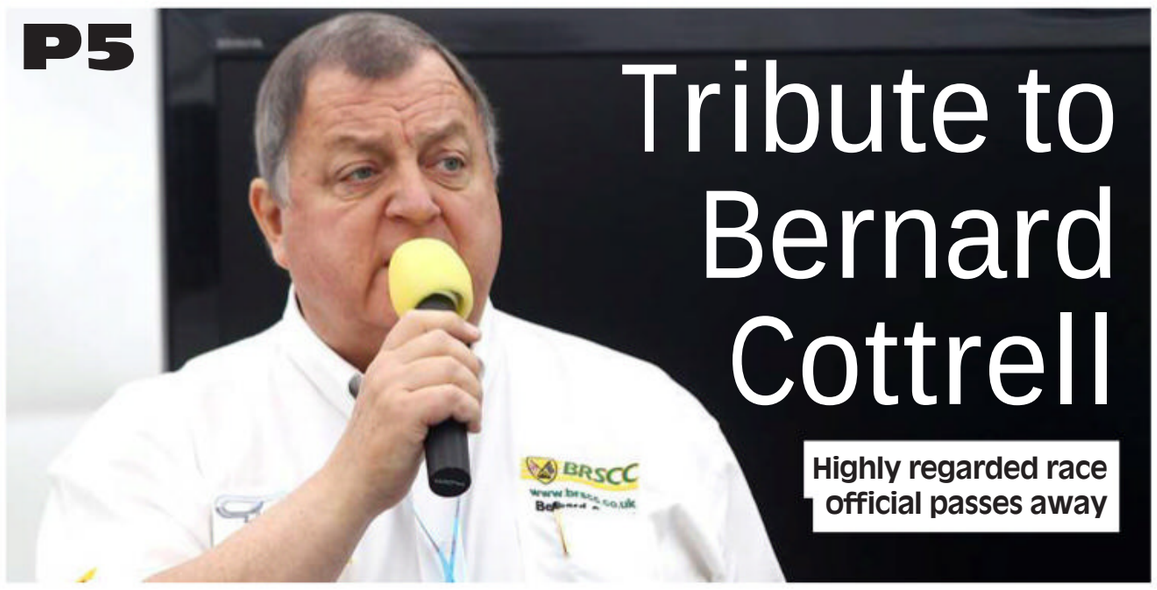

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Merc and Aston share British GT

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How tin-top battlers tame the test of Knockhill

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RACING NEWS

Aston Martin will appeal

Photos: Motorsport Images

Vettel ran back to the podium

ASTON MARTIN GOES ON THE ATTACK TO GET VETTEL'S POINTS BACK

British team is convinced that stewards got the decision wrong in Budapest

By Matt James

The Aston Martin Formula 1 team has confirmed that it will appeal Sebastian Vettel's disqualification from second place in the Hungarian Grand Prix 10 days ago as it believes it was a mechanical fault with the car that led to it being kicked out.

Vettel finished just behind winner Esteban Ocon's Alpine in the Budapest race, but the German stopped on the slowing down lap. When officials tried to retrieve the mandated one litre of fuel for a sample post-race, it was unable to and therefore deleted Vettel from the results. That handed second place to Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton.

However, Aston Martin chiefs have declared that the machine had a failed lift pump. It is convinced there was enough fuel in the machine for it to have been checked and it was only this glitch that stopped the reading from being taken.

A team statement issued last week said: "There was and is no suggestion that Vettel's Aston Martin AMR21 car benefited from a performance advantage from the alleged regulatory breach, or that it was deliberate.

"Since the team's data indicated that there was more than one litre of fuel in the car after the race – 1.74 litres according to the data – the team immediately reserved its right to appeal, and has requested a right of review alongside the appeal procedure, as a result of having discovered significant new evidence relevant to the sanction which was unavailable to it at the time of the FIA stewards' decision."

The result of any review will take place before the stewards reconsider the matter. The stewards will be the same ones who decided the original penalty at the Hungaroring.

If the appeal is successful, it would mean Hamilton's lead in the F1 World championship race stands at six points going into the next race of the season, the Belgian Grand Prix on August 29.

DEAL FOR F1 ON TWEAKED HUNGARY TRACK LAYOUT

Sources suggest that the bosses of the Hungaroring have signed a long-term deal to keep the race in Budapest into the 2030s.

Reports also reveal that modification are planned to the Hungaroring, which joined the F1 schedule in 1986.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said that any alterations to the layout would be welcomed. The Hungaroring is the second-slowest venue on the Formula 1 schedule and has limited overtaking opportunities.

Wolff said: "You have such a competent manager with Ariane [Frank-Meulenbelt], that she knows exactly what the sport needs here and she's been one of the great promoters that we have in Formula 1. Every track has pros and cons and we love coming to Hungary.

"If you could point to one negative aspect, and this is the only one I can find among 100 positives, is that the overtaking opportunities are very limited with these very efficient cars.

"You can see even in F3 there is no overtaking . Maybe we can work on some improvements in terms of overtaking but if in doubt, leave it like it is, don't change a winning formula."

Hungary has long-term deal

Williams has relied on drivers bringing funding in recent seasons

WILLIAMS SAYS PAY DRIVERS ARE A THING OF THE PAST

The Williams Formula 1 team bosses have declared that it will no long have to rely on pay drivers to continue in Formula 1 in the future.

The multiple title-winning British team has been forced to employ racers who bring a significant budget in recent seasons as it has struggled for finance. That has amplified its slide down the grid, but last year's takeover and cash injection by Dorilton Capital means that the top brass says it is no longer beholden to drivers with significant backing.

Team principal Jost Capito says that Williams can now select the drivers it wants for forthcoming seasons.

"I think we at Williams, we are in the position that we solely decide on the drivers," said Capito. "We are not dependent like in the past on somebody, a driver who brings money.

"We have a long-term plan to get back to the top, and we have to choose the drivers that fit into that plan.

"We are just thinking about this. Everybody can talk to us, but the decision is with us."

It is anticipated that rising British star George Russell will leave the team at the end of this term and head to Mercedes, while Mercedes junior and current Formula E driver Nyck de Vries is tipped to be in line as a replacement. This would help Williams offset the costs of its Mercedes engine deal.

TICKTUM KICKED OFF WILLIAMS JUNIOR DRIVER PROGRAMME

British Formula 2 racer Dan Ticktum has been released from his role as a Williams junior driver.

The Carlin Formula 2 driver, who won a F2 race in Monaco this year and is fourth in the championship standings, posted on his social media last week that he was now out of the scheme.

"Thank you to Williams for the opportunity," Ticktum wrote on Instagram. "Hope to work together in the future."

Williams has recently declared that it will no long rely on pay driver for the future (*see separate story*) and is looking to refine its driver programmes.

The remaining drivers on the Williams junior programme are Jack Aitken, Jamie Chadwick and Roy Nissany. Aitken made his grand prix debut with Williams in Sakhir last year after George Russell stepped in for Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes.

Ticktum has uncertain future

BRITISH GT MEETING DISRUPTED BY PADDOCK FIRE

Running at Snetterton's British GT meeting last Saturday was halted for around two hours by a fire in the paddock.

At roughly 1500hrs Ginetta outfit Alastair Rushforth Motorsport's truck caught fire and marshals and other first responders fought the blaze. The ongoing Ginetta GT Academy race was red-flagged and the paddock cleared for around an hour. There were no casualties.

Fire brought a halt to the British GT race meeting at Snetterton

Rushworth told Motorsport News: "Everyone's OK and that's all that matters. I can only assume, because it was the only thing that was plugged in, is there was a battery on charge. I don't carry anything else that's flammable in that respect. It's a mess, so it's hard to tell where it originated.

The team continued racing on Sunday with its two GT5 Challenge cars. "It'll take more than that to stop me," Rushforth added. "Being the small team is never easy and this throws another hump in the road. But everyone in this paddock has been brilliant. There's been offers of help and support, not just from Ginetta people, but GB3 teams [and] British GT teams. I'll help anybody but it's strange to be on the receiving end.

"I was being offered hotel rooms, somebody's offered me a truck for the rest of the year, someone else has offered to buy me a truck, I've been offered awnings. I can't thank everybody enough."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

MOTORSPORT MOURNS THE PASSING OF RACE OFFICIAL BERNARD COTTRELL

Cottrell was a highly respected race official in the UK

The British GT championship remembered Cottrell

Well-known figure in the sport passes away after a long battle

By Matt James

Meetings across the United Kingdom last weekend paused to pay their respects to Bernard Cottrell, a senior race official and clerk of the course.

Cottrell, who passed away aged 67 after a battle with leukaemia, began his career in motorsport as a marshal and worked his way through the ranks to become one of the most respected and well-liked officials in the UK.

He held a number of senior posts, including a 15-year spell as the British Racing and Sports Car Club's chairman and he also was the senior race official for the British GT Championship for 10 years between 2007 and 2017.

In addition he was a member of the Motor Sports Council.

He was also, more recently a race director for the 750 Motor Club and a proud member of the British Racing Drivers' Club. He was also known to many others within motorsport through his roles as operations director of the Autosport International Show.

Race meetings at Brands Hatch and the British GT meeting at Snetterton both acknowledged Cottrell's impact in motorsport.

A statement from the governing body, Motorsport UK, read: "Everyone at Motorsport UK is deeply saddened by the passing of Bernard Cottrell. He dedicated his life to motorsport and will be greatly missed."

More than just a motor racing man

It was inevitable that a phone call with Bernard Cottrell would not be the work of a moment, not that I ever complained. Indeed, I looked forward to them, but learned to pick a time where I had quite a few minutes to spare.

Although probably a face unknown to most trackside fans, his influence in the organisation, infrastructure and vision of a racing future knew no bounds. While the fans might not have known him, those who were summoned to race control when he was clerk of the course knew him all too well. He was firm and fair, and that is something that any competitor who'd walked out with a slap on the wrists would come to realise.

The most striking things about Bernie, apart from his professionalism and dedication to the roles performed, was his positive attitude and his interest in the welfare of those he met. Well, that and the odd gin and tonic…

Bernard was a can-do man, and that extended to his work and personal life. There was no problem too big for him to solve, and there was always a way around any mountain that was put in front of him. The one hurdle he couldn't overcome was leukaemia, but he put up one hell of a fight.

He was always on hand for advice and help, and anyone who knew him well will attest that he made sure you knew he was in your corner. A greater supporter you couldn't ask for – be that if you enjoyed motorsport or if you just wanted a mate.

And it wasn't only motor racing chat that filled the hours together. An immensely proud family man, Bernie was always giving of his time on a personal level and took a genuine delight in hearing about others and their lives. Our meetings usually took place in a pub – namely the Tide End Cottage in Teddington – and got progressively more scurrilous and entertaining as the evenings wore on.

Motor racing should be grateful that a man with Bernard's skills and acumen was involved in the sport at such a high level. And those who were lucky enough to call him a friend will know that they too were very blessed. Rest in peace, Bernard.

Matt James

Thompson will drive Mini

THOMPSON TO MAKE RACE RETURN

British Touring Car Championship racer Bobby Thompson will make his race comeback in the Mini Festival at Brands Hatch on August 21-22 in the Mighty Mini category.

The 25-year-old has not competed since barrel-rolling out of the seventh meeting of the BTCC last season at the wheel of a Trade Price Cars Racing Audi S3 at Croft in October 2020. The accident left the Essex driver with concussion and he has not driven a racing car since the crash.

Thompson has been offered a drive in the Mighty Mini championship by Steve Rideout and will join the grid for the events on the 1.2-mile configuration.

Thompson said he was thrilled to be offered the drive. "I had only met Steve once before, so it is very kind of him to offer me the seat for the weekend. I will get a full day of testing on the Friday before the meeting, so that will help me get right back into the groove.

"I can't wait to see how I get on. I had some longer-term issues with concussion after my Croft accident, but those are behind me now.

"I am working hard to get back into a race drive full-time in 2022 and I have several meetings lined up with backers. My heart really wants to be back in the BTCC and I will be trying everything to make that happen."

TURKINGTON AIMS TO GET HIMSELF IN THE HUNT AT KNOCKHILL

Four-time British touring car title winner Colin Turkington says he is in prime position to haul himself back into the hunt for this year's crown going to the fifth meeting of the competition at Knockhill this weekend.

The Northern Irishman has struggled for results in the last two BTCC meetings. At Brands Hatch at the end of June he scored two points and, after a race-one spin at Oulton Park 10 days ago, he left Cheshire with just a further 12. He is in ninth place in the standings, but only 37 behind table-topper Ash Sutton (Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50).

Turkington says going to Knockhill with only 15kg of success ballast on his WSR-run BMW 330i M Sport will give him the perfect launchpad to get right back into the hunt for a record-breaking fifth title.

He said: "That is the beauty of the championship, you can play your way back into things. Over the course of the weekend at the last rounds at Oulton Park, even though I had a shocker I somehow managed close the gap to the summit.

Turkington has high hopes for Knockhill

"If I was 10 points better off, I would be that much further up the standings that it would make Knockhill very difficult for me because I would have that much more success ballast. I feel like I just need a good clear weekend and Knockhill is the perfect place for me to be going for that potentially to happen."

The Team BMW racer said that the competitive fight for this season's silverware also meant that drivers were taking points from each other and no single driver had a huge advantage. "It is very much game on for the title and I think it is much more wide open this year than any other," he explained. "When you look at the top 10, there is 41 points between us all and one strong weekend in terms of a points haul will produce a massive swing in the picture."

JORDAN TO PILOT BTCC HYBRID TEST CAR IN SILVERSTONE RACES

Andrew Jordan will return to the British Touring Car Championship at Silverstone at the end of September driving the category's' prototype hybrid-powered Toyota Corolla.

The car has been built by Speedworks Motorsport as a test mule for the new Cosworth Electronics-developed hybrid technology. It has conducted several test sessions and will join the BTCC grid at Silverstone as a non-points-scoring entry before hybrids are adopted into the category in 2022.

Jordan, the 2013 BTCC champion, will participate in the free practice sessions, qualifying and races and the hatchback will also be fitted with the new-for-2022 customer TOCA engine, which has been developed by M-Sport. The Corolla will start from the pitlane in all three races so it does not interfere with the regular championship contenders.

BTCC chief executive Alan Gow said: "The plan is to run at Silverstone in both free practices, qualifying and the three races. It will be invisible as far as championship points go, and wherever it qualifies it won't be starting from there. So while it won't get involved in any real dicing with other cars, it's important that our fans and partners have the opportunity of seeing the hybrid car in action ahead of 2022."

Jordan will race the hybrid Toyota at Silverstone's BTCC event

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Oxley added
Branden Lee Oxley has joined the GB3 championship grid with Chris Dittmann Racing for the rest of this season, making his debut at Snetterton last weekend. The 17-year-old Anglo-Thai has raced in Spanish Formula 4 so far in 2021 for his single-seater debut, plus raced in Imola's recent EuroFormula Open round with a best result of sixth.

Smith is in
Australian rising star Tommy Smith also newly joined the GB3 championship grid at Snetterton last weekend, in his case with Douglas Motorsport. The 19-year-old intends to race at selected GB3 events over the remainder of 2021. His experience includes the Formula Regional European championship and Asian F3 championship.

Lubin returns
Arden's Frederick Lubin returned to GB3 championship action last weekend at Snetterton having missed the Spa and Donington Park triple-header meetings due to a mild case of myocarditis. The 16-year-old said on Twitter: "I'd like to thank everybody for their support. It has meant the world to me."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Richard Styles, IMechE Formula Student

British F4 turns a new leaf in 2022

CEO: "exciting new chapter"

MOTORSPORT UK TO TAKE OVER ORGANISATION OF BRITISH F4

Ford's half-century UK junior single-seater link stretching to FF1600's beginnings is over

By Graham Keilloh

Ford's over half-century-long support for UK junior single-seater racing has been brought to a close with Motorsport UK taking over the organisation of the British Formula 4 championship.

The governing body will be British F4's organiser for three years from 2022, taking over from RacingLine that, backed by Ford, promoted the category in the seven seasons since its inception, a role it also held for its British Formula Ford predecessor. Ford's involvement meanwhile stretches back to Formula Ford's first days in 1967.

Motorsport UK added that for British F4 it has "a bold vision for elevating the series" and "will provide a highly visible promotional platform, which includes retaining the championship's place on the British Touring Car Championship roster, with further rounds at key events under consideration".

Motorsport UK also confirmed that in 2022 the championship will switch to the halo-featuring second-generation F4 car, something governing body CEO Hugh Chambers told Motorsport News last month was likely. Chambers also confirmed then that Motorsport UK was, at this "natural point to pause", undertaking a more general review of the F4 championship and conducting a tender for its chassis and engine suppliers.

Chambers with this latest news added: "The championship is embarking on an exciting new chapter and Motorsport UK is delighted to be leading its evolution. This step represents an important milestone in the governing body's sport development strategy, and we want to further develop the series as the best platform from which rising stars can continue on their pathway to international competition."

BRITISH F3 REBRANDS AS GB3 WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT

The BRDC British Formula 3 championship has rebranded as the GB3 championship due to the FIA limiting use of the F3 title to its Formula 1-supporting F3 series.

As Motorsport News closed for press last week the British championship confirmed its name would change with immediate effect, and raced with the new title at Snetterton last weekend. It said the change "is purely a consequence of the FIA's decision" and its organiser MotorSport Vision added it is "very disappointed" to make the change and had "done everything possible to preserve the title".

BRDC British F3 started in 2016 having been known previously as the BRDC F4 championship. The previous British F3 iteration, that ended in 2014, had famous heritage with champions including Ayrton Senna and Mika Hakkinen.

MSV chief executive Jonathan Palmer said: "I am extremely saddened by the fact that we are no longer permitted to use the British F3 name. The British F3 title has enormous heritage and the championship has played an important role in the careers of many F1 drivers, including my own.

"GB3 offers a strong, fresh and concise identity. MSV remains firmly committed to providing the fairest and best-value championship at this level anywhere in the world."

The British category has to leave F3 title to the F1 support series

Sheffield team won on design and efficient internal combustion

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD BECOMES BRITAIN'S SECOND EVER FORMULA STUDENT WINNER

The University of Sheffield has become only the second British winner of the Formula Student contest after fending off stiff competition at the Silverstone event last month.

Team Sheffield Formula Racing prevailed in the competition wherein teams design, build and run single-seater cars, with events to test their vehicle plus formal presentations to test their engineering knowledge. Cardiff University in 2017 was the only previous British winner of the annual contest that stretches back to 1998.

The Yorkshire-based crew picked up silverware in the endurance, sprint, design for second-year vehicles and the most efficient internal combustion vehicle challenges.

The University of Glasgow, the University of Nottingham and Staffordshire University also picked up awards at the event. The 2022 competition kicks off this autumn.

F3 OLD AND NEW MARKS SNETTERTON ANNIVERSARY

The GB3 championship commemorated Snetterton's 70th anniversary last weekend by being joined at the same meeting by its 1950s Formula 3 equivalents from the 500 Owners Association. The recently rebranded BRDC British F3 championship had its usual triple header while there also at the Norfolk meeting was two packed races of 500cc F3 cars, showcasing how things changed since 1951 when the circuit first opened. It is thought to be the first time the 500 Owners Association has raced alongside its modern equivalents.

FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL STAR BROWNE SET FOR GB3 HILLSPEED BOW

Formula Ford Festival winner Jonathan Browne is set to make his debut in the GB3 championship this weekend at Silverstone, heralding Hillspeed's return to the category.

Festival star

Browne for his slicks-and-wings single-seater bow will race with Hillspeed in the rebranded British Formula 3's final three meetings of 2021. The 21-year-old Irishman has strong Formula Ford pedigree, dominating 2019's Brands Hatch Festival and finishing narrow runner-up in 2020's event.

Hillspeed has been a regular in BRDC F3 and its F4 predecessor since its 2013 inception, most recently taking victories in 2019 and podium finishes last year, though it's been absent from the grid so far in 2021.

Browne said: "I am extremely proud to be taking the next step in my racing career with such a prestigious team as Hillspeed. The team has made me feel very welcome already and we are eager to see how we measure up in this competitive field."

Hillspeed boss Richard Ollerenshaw added: "We've been very impressed with Jonathan's performance during the limited testing he has had."

RACING NEWS

BRITCAR UK RACING VITAL FOR PRAGA R1'S INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

The Czech concern said its sportscar's presence on UK circuits is helping establish it internationally as Australia/NZ, Benelux and California racing deals are inked

Photos: Praga Cars, Jakob Ebrey, Simply Race

Praga races in Britcar

By Graham Keilloh

Praga has said racing its R1 in the UK has been vital to building its international reputation after signing the first three racing dealers to its global partner network.

The Czech company's all-carbon R1 competes in the Britcar Endurance Championship and is set for its own 2022 one-make UK championship.

Praga Racing's first three official international dealers, all with strong motorsport reputations, are for Australia/New Zealand, Benelux and California. It is also in discussions with potential dealers for Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America.

Head of commercial operations Mark Harrison told Motorsport News: "Really it has been through Britcar and what we're doing in the UK, and that was the plan that if we do a good job in the UK the rest of the world spots it. The motorsport world looks at what's happening in the UK and the automotive world [does too] to a certain extent. This proves it out.

"We've seen over the past few weeks and months really good people coming to us saying we like what you're doing with the R1, can we get involved?"

Praga's UK dealer partner VR Motorsport meanwhile will be rebranded Praga Racing UK and Ireland. "If we can have [name format] consistency around the world it just makes it clear for the customer," Harrison said.

Harrison added its one-make UK contest preparations are advanced and details such as a calendar will be announced imminently.

Harrison (l) says UK racing vital

Team Abba Mercedes is set to be back on track at Silverstone

NEARY MERCEDES RETURNING TO TRACK THIS WEEKEND AFTER SNETTERTON MISS

British GT frontrunners Richard and Sam Neary in their Team Abba Mercedes GT3 are set for a racing return this weekend after missing Snetterton's meeting due to previous-round damage.

Richard was involved in a multi-car shunt at the start of British GT's Spa race last month and the father-and-son pair missed Snetterton's round last weekend as the Mercedes was being reshelled. The duo won British GT's Donington Park race and appeared title contenders before their Spa and Snetterton non-scores. They aim to return to the track this weekend at Silverstone's round of the GT Cup, for which they lead the standings.

Richard told Motorsport News of the reshelling: "It's just the way it is, they just take time to do right.

"That's the plan [to return for Silverstone GT Cup], we're rushing like mad to get ready for that because we're still leading that championship.

"Had it panned out slightly different we would be leading the [British GT] championship. We definitely had the pace to come second [at Spa]; I don't think we would have beat Leo [Machitski, Spa's winner], we had a 20-second [success] penalty and Leo didn't.

"We went [to Spa] to keep the title hopes alive but they're dead now. We'll do all the other rounds; we'll go out and win a race. Our season goal was to get a podium."

BUMPER ALFA ROMEO TURN OUT FOR FESTIVAL ITALIA

The 750 Motor Club's Alfa Romeo championship is set for bumper grids at its double-header gathering at Brands Hatch's popular Festival Italia meeting this Sunday.

As Motorsport News went to press 31 entries were in place for rounds nine and 10 of this year's championship.

Points leader Barry McMahon with his 156 Turbo will be joined on track by returning likely challengers Richard Thurbin's Lancia Delta Integrale plus the McFie brothers Chris and Simon in their Fiat Punto Abarths.

Additionally Scott Austin in his Alfa 155 with Fiat 20v power took a win at last year's Brands Festival Italia in tricky conditions, and was lying second in the last round at Snetterton before a puncture.

The Alfa championship will be joined at Brands by a strong HRDC Classic Alfa Challenge entry for its 30-minute race, ensuring a plentiful day of Alfa racing. Chris Snowdon and Alex Jupe in Alfetta GTVs plus James Colburn's Sprint GT 2.0 are the probable strong contenders.

Alfa points leader McMahon is set to be challenged this weekend

Tributes were held for Foote

MARSHAL KILLED IN BRANDS ACCIDENT NAMED

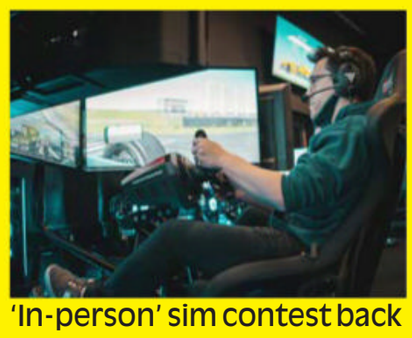
The marshal who died in a Brands Hatch accident 10 days ago has been named as Rob Foote.

Bristol-born Foote regularly marshalled at Brands Hatch, Gurston Down and Goodwood plus was a scrutineer.

The 67-year-old also was a former mayor of Epsom and Ewell borough and a serving councillor. He spent 30 years in the airline industry as well as running a car servicing business. A minute's silence was held at motorsport events across the UK.this weekend..

The accident occurred during the British Automobile Racing Club meeting's Classic Touring Car Racing Club Pre '93 & Pre '03 Touring Car race, when Simon Beament's Ford Escort RS2000, after contact with another car, hit the barrier on the outside of the start-finish straight and entered a barrel roll. BARC confirmed that another marshal, David Dray, was taken to hospital with a broken arm while the driver's injuries included a double broken leg.

BARC added: "We must never take for granted the dedication and commitment of the volunteers that make our sport happen and these tragic, but mercifully rare, moments are an opportunity to reflect on their vital roles."



'In-person' sim contest back

BIG NAMES SET FOR SIM SERIES' RETURN

The Simply Race Endurance Series 'in-person' esports contest will return next month with Ford's and Jenson Button's teams set to be among the competitors.

Fifteen teams will gather at a new Milton Keynes venue, with the five-round championship starting with a 12 hours of Buddh race on September 19.

The June 2022 finale is a Spa 24 Hours contest where the championship's top seven race in DPI cars and the remaining eight go for GTE class victory. Entries for round one are open now and there is prize money for the winners.

Organisers are hopeful Ford's Fordzilla team and Jenson Button's Rocket Zansho will compete, joining among others reigning 2019 champion Radicals.

Simply Race director Mike Yau told MN: "We started Simply Race Endurance Series for the people that wanted a regular LAN [local area network] event and for like-minded people to get involved in a championship. We developed a great reputation for delivering high-quality racing along with our broadcasts which put our venue in the spotlight over the last few years."

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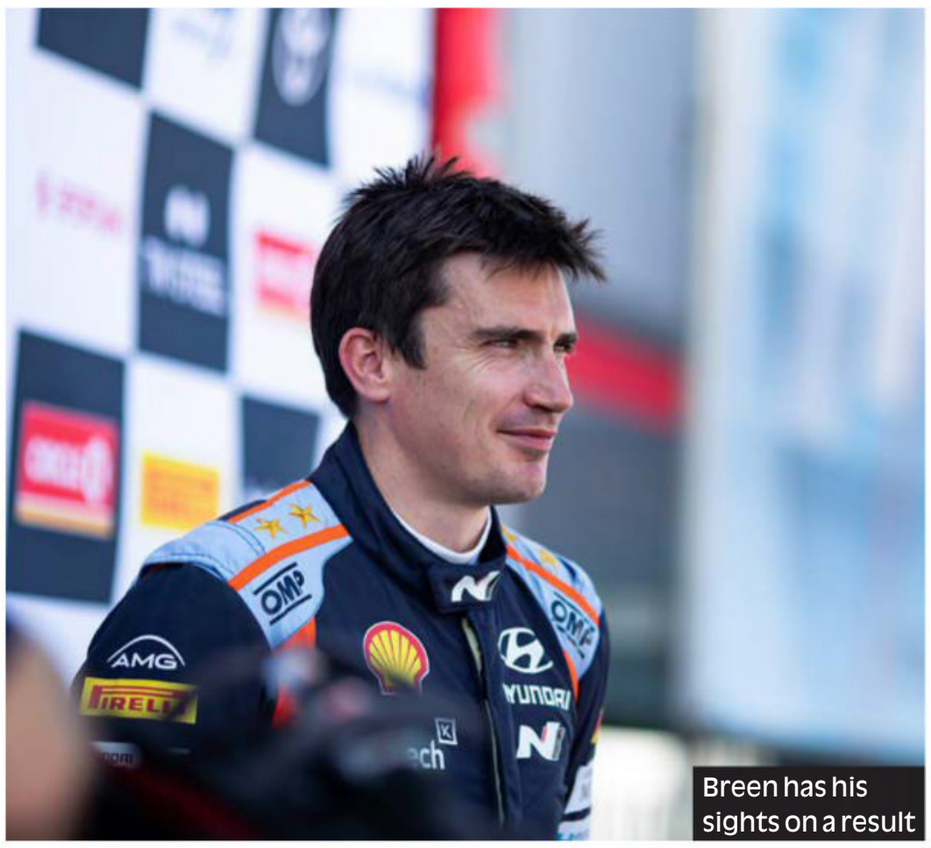
RALLY NEWS



Breen has his sights on a result

Photo: Hyundai, M-Sport, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey

ESSENTIALS

Ypres Rally
August 13-15
WRC round 8/12
Base: Ypres, Belgium
Surface: Asphalt
Stages: 20
Distance: 183.78 miles

The Irishman will be part of the WRC top-flight line-up for Hyundai

BREEN RELISHES CHANCE TO GO ON THE ATTACK IN YPRES

Irishman primed for star showing on tricky Belgian stages this weekend

By Graham Lister

Craig Breen has a gilt-edged opportunity to score his first World championship victory when the series visits Belgium and the country's Ypres Rally for the first time this week.

Breen and his Hyundai team-mate and home hero Thierry Neuville are the only World Rally Car drivers with Ypres experience taking part on round eight of the season.

While the Ypres Rally has thrown up several first-time winners over the years, experience will be king during the opening two legs of the event, which use tried and tested stages around the town and neighbouring Poperinge in northwest Flanders.

Breen, who starts Friday's opening leg in seventh, will also benefit from the likelihood of warm and dry conditions. Although the road surface on the farmland stages is notoriously dirty as a result of the endless corner 'cutting', grip is at more of a premium when it rains meaning those running at the head of the order are handed an advantage.

"It's definitely one of the most interesting and specialised rallies you'll ever do and one of the events I really like the most," said the 31-year-old. "On paper, it seems to be a strange profile but in the car it is an amazing challenge. At pretty much every junction, the surface is a little bit different."

After his planned Ypres debut in 2012 was called off following the death of co-driver Gareth Roberts on the preceding IRC round in Sicily, Breen took the start of the European-counting 2013 edition and finished third driving a Peugeot 207 S2000.

Breen was back in 2014 at the wheel of a Peugeot 208 T16 but was never in the fight after an opening-stage puncture before transmission failure forced his exit in the closing stages. He was leading into the second day in 2015 but an off into a field shortly before the final loop filled his car's radiator and led to his retirement from third place with an overheating engine.

That made his 2019 victory even sweeter, despite the weakened opposition he faced due to the event's decision to step away from the ERC.

M-SPORT STAR SAYS HE IS READY FOR AN EXTREME RALLY

Adrien Fourmaux insists he's under no pressure to deliver on the Ypres Rally, despite the increasing weight of expectation on his shoulders.

M-Sport's 26-year-old Frenchman find gets his fourth start in one of the British team's Ford Fiesta WRCs in his fourth full season of rallying.

Having been raised 30 miles over the Belgian border in France, Fourmaux has knowledge of the Ypres terrain, even though he's not tackled the event before.

And following a strong run to fifth overall on the sealed-surface Croatia Rally in April – when he set a brace of second-fastest stage times – Fourmaux is being tipped for big things this weekend.

"Competing in Ypres in a World Rally Car is extreme, but I am confident," said Fourmaux. "We had a good test with a bit of rain, some drying roads and proper dry roads.

"Of course, we want a good result and for sure we will do our best like always. Maybe I have a bit of an advantage because I know a bit about what to expect, apart from Thierry [Neuville] and Craig [Breen].

"Croatia was a good result already, but we need to keep going forward and we need to be faster again. But I'm not putting any pressure on myself, I just want to be in the fight with the top drivers for as long as possible. The more I am driving [the World Rally Car], the more I improve my driving and my pace. There is no pressure coming from the outside."

Fourmaux gets another chance

McErlean has tackled Ypres in R2

McERLEAN WILL BANK ON HIS YPRES EXPERIENCE

Josh McErlean has highlighted the importance of experience ahead of his second WRC3 start of 2021.

McErlean tackled the Ypres Rally in 2018 and 2019 when it was headlined by the Belgian and British championships.

After using R2 machinery on both occasions, he will return in a Hyundai i20 R5 with stand-in co-driver James Fulton after Takamoto Katsuta recruited Keaton Williams to replace the injured Daniel Barritt.

"It's nice to have some previous experience of the roads we will be competing on and that really does boost the confidence," said the Motorsport Ireland Rally Academy-backed McErlean, who is also a member of the Hyundai Junior Driver scheme. "There is a lot of unknowns but to be part of the atmosphere and experience is a true privilege, [it] should be a great chance for a result."

McErlean was fifth in WRC3 on his last start in Portugal.

Scott Martin has been out of luck on previous outings

MARTIN AIMING TO REACH THE FINISH FOR THE FIRST TIME

Co-driver Scott Martin tried but failed to finish in Ypres on his two previous starts with Craig Breen in 2014 and 2015 when they were competing in the European Rally Championship.

Technical failures stopped their Peugeot 208 T16 on both occasions but Martin's knowledge will hand Elfyn Evans a helping hand in the build-up to the Belgian event.

"There are a lot of cuts, it's famous for that, and as soon as you start cutting you bring mud and grass on the road," Martin said. "As an event it's not too demanding because it's quite flat and you can see quite a lot. Of course, there are lots of junctions and straights, but it's when it's wet that local knowledge comes into play. You'll get a big advantage going first on the road on the fast pass because of all the mud that'll be dragged onto the road. But there's no advantage on the second pass.

"It's an event with a lot of history, one I enjoy and the service park in the town square creates a great atmosphere."

EVANS READY FOR THE UNEXPECTED ON BELGIUM'S TOP-FLIGHT DEBUT

Elfyn Evans will expect the unexpected when he makes his Ypres Rally debut tomorrow (Friday).

Although co-driver Scott Martin has started the Belgian asphalt round on two occasions, the Welshman is very much an Ypres rookie.

"Like many of the drivers I've never competed in Ypres before, so it's an all-new challenge and we can't be 100% sure what to expect," the factory Toyota driver said. "Initially the roads can seem quite straightforward as there are not so many corners and just a lot of straights and very tight junctions. But what's quite evident from our test is that there are a lot of surface changes, grip changes and quite a lot of cutting, so there's a bit more to it in reality."

Evans is 37 points behind team-mate and fellow Ypres newcomer Sebastien Ogier in the title standings with five rounds remaining but home hero and former event winner Thierry Neuville is 15 points adrift.

After finishing second on Rally Italy in June, Evans has hit a rocky patch with 10th in Kenya, fifth in Estonia and a combined 16 points. "I've not done as well in the last couple of rallies as I would have liked, so we're going to be targeting a strong result," he said.

Evans has limited knowledge of the tricky surfaces in Belgium

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RALLY NEWS

MOTORSPORT GAMES 2021 DELAYED IN 'POST-COVID WORLD'

Rallying's FIA Motorsport Games debut has been put on hold for another year after the second edition of the event was postponed until 2022.

The Olympics-style competition organised by SRO had been due to take place for a second time at Paul Ricard in France at the end of October with a competition for Rally2, Rally4 and historic cars included for the first time.

However, the FIA has confirmed that "in light of the ongoing challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and to ensure the safety of competitors, staff and the wider community, the second edition of the FIA Motorsport Games should be rescheduled on October 29-30, 2022 at Circuit Paul Ricard as initially planned".

The governing body had hoped that Motorsport Ireland and Motorsport UK would enter a driver in each of the three sections of the Tarmac rally.

PRODRIVE'S DAKAR MACHINE TO BE TWEAKED FOR 2022

Prodrive's Hunter Dakar challenger will get an upgrade for next January's event.

The Banbury firm, which competes under the Bahrain Raid Xtreme banner on the Dakar and other cross-country events, has redesigned the Hunter to fall into line with the FIA's new T1+ regulations, which have been developed to help the performance balance between two- and four-wheel-drive T1 class cars.

Changes include larger tyres, increased suspension travel and a wider track, plus modifications to the drivetrain and bodywork.

The first Hunter T1+ is under construction at Prodrive's Oxfordshire base. A customer sales programme is also planned from next season onwards.

Photos: M-Sport, mckleiin-imagedatabase.com

Greensmith: braking focus

M-SPORT'S GUY GREENSMITH BUOYED BY PRE-BELGIAN EVENT TEST MILEAGE

British driver thinks he need to show commitment to extract the maximum in Ypres

The British M-Sport driver has mapped out a strategy

By Graham Lister

Gus Greensmith reckons his pre-Ypres Rally test helped him to 'nail' his braking for Belgium's first World championship counter.

The 24-year-old Briton, who is co-driven by Irishman Chris Patterson, has highlighted stopping without losing time as one of the main challenges he'll face when he makes his event debut.

"One of my main focuses on the test was to make sure I was nailing my braking points for the junctions and not giving away time," Greensmith said after testing close to Ypres for one and a half days last week. "If you are not quite committing on the braking you are giving away a couple of tenths and that adds up, so you've got to be pushing the limits. But the grip is so changeable, even in the dry, and you've got to be careful because it can easily catch you out.

"The roads are much narrower than in Germany, for example, and there's much less room for error.

"If you have a small slide in Germany it's nothing, but if you have a small slide in Ypres then you're on the edge of the road so you need to drive straight and clean. You need a car that works well in the cuts because there are many and you need a predictable car because you don't want to be sliding when the edge of the road is so close."

SUNINEN CONVINCED RALLY2 STEP CAN BOOST TOP-FLIGHT CAREER

Dropping back to Rally2 from World Rally Car level hasn't dented Teemu Suninen's desire to succeed in the WRC.

Suninen has been demoted to M-Sport's second-tier WRC2 line-up for the Ypres Rally with Adrien Fourmaux taking over the Finn's Ford Fiesta WRC.

Although Fourmaux's return to the top class is partly the result of his Red Bull sponsorship, Suninen's standing in the team hasn't been helped by his inconsistent form this season.

But the Finn isn't giving up and is determined to remain in the frame for a Rally1 drive in 2022.

"I'm still motivated, of course," said Suninen. "It's a challenge to jump between the cars, but also the challenge is making the [Rally2 car] strong, so from that side I'm happy to go [to Ypres] and I'm not losing the motivation for sure."

With the WRC2 entry down to five cars for Ypres, Suninen is well placed to score big points. But points are secondary to a return to form.

"The ultimate goal is to get my level where I have been before and be happy for the driving," he said. "I am not setting the result targets. Even in Estonia we ended up being close to the goal in terms of the result but generally I was not happy what we were able to do there."

Suninen will step down from his WRC Fiesta to a WRC2 R5-spec version this weekend

Kristensson will be up against five other WRC2 rivals

KRISTENSSON'S JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN ON WRC2 OUTING

Junior WRC champion Tom Kristensson has revealed he won't know who he'll be up against in WRC2 on the Ypres Rally – because he doesn't look at entry lists in advance.

The M-Sport driver is competing in WRC2 as his prize for winning the JWRC crown in 2020 and has been focusing on his metal preparations in recent months.

"I have not looked at the WRC2 entry because there's nothing I can do about it," said the Swede. "I just need to focus on my own performance and be the best I can physically and mentally."

The Ypres Rally is the penultimate round of this season's JWRC. After three rounds Finn Sami Pajari holds a four-point advantage ahead of Martins Sesks from Latvia. Northern Ireland's Jon Armstrong is third in the table, 15 points behind Pajari.

The JWRC entry has fallen to a six-car line-up, which includes Motorsport Ireland-backed William Creighton.

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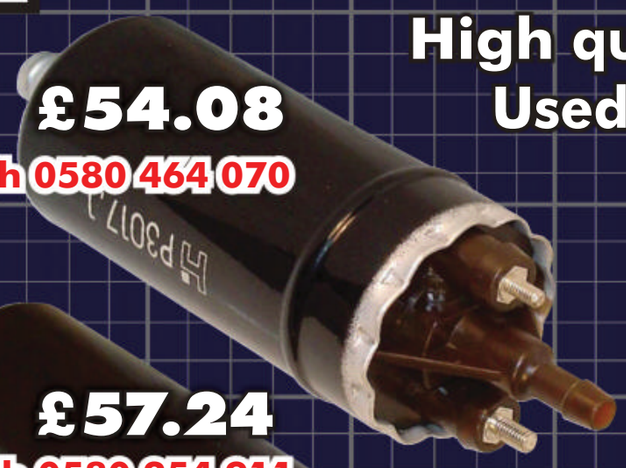

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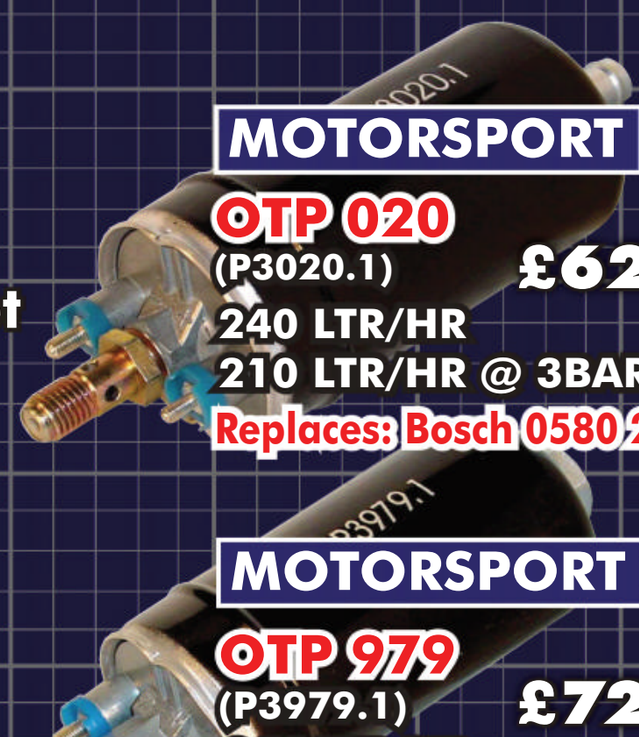

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RALLY NEWS

McCormack: happy

McCORMACK LOVES THE AMERICAN DREAM

Marty McCormack says he would head back to the USA as soon as he could if the chance presented itself again.

On his American Rally Association debut on the New England Forest Rally at the end of July driving a Skoda Fabia R5+ for reigning champion Barry McKenna's team, McCormack finished third overall and loved the experience on what he said was the fastest rally he'd contested.

"I had a fantastic time," McCormack told MN. "[It] hasn't got the bureaucracy that the sport has here, it's just simpler, like where we were 20 years ago. I must say there's a fresh thing about it. Good people, good craic, mighty roads and events – sure some of the stages were a bit rough but it's the way it is. I had a great time. I'm by no means a big professional but I've been to a few places. And a trophy, that's always good."

NEFR was McCormack's first gravel rally in two-and-a-half years. He will be back out in his Ford Escort Mk2 on the Grampian as he builds up seat time for the Roger Albert Clark Rally in November.

EDWARDS AIMING FOR STRONGER FEELING WITH POLO ON GRAMPIAN

Reigning British Rally champion leads the entry list for this weekend's third round

Photos: Gary Craig Motorsport Photography, Jakob Ebrey

Edwards has tweaked Polo

By Luke Barry

British Rally Championship leader Matt Edwards headlines the entry for this weekend's Grampian Forest Rally and is eager to improve his affinity with his Volkswagen Polo R5.

Edwards won the Nicky Grist Stages last month but has told Motorsport News that he was still getting to grips with his new-for-2021 machine on his first gravel event with the VW.

He said: "It didn't fit like a glove but it's obviously a good enough car that I was able to drive it regardless," Edwards said. "It's just a totally different car isn't it to what I'm used to so testing is a benefit, but I just want to try and get it a little bit more comfortable and natural.

"I hadn't done anything [on gravel] for 18 months so there was equally an element of me getting back into it as well," he added. "It didn't behave quite on the rally like it had on the [pre-Nicky Grist] test so that highlighted a few characteristics that I just want to try and neutralise."

Edwards' closest rival on the Nicky Grist, Tom Cave, won't travel to Scotland but the competition will still be tough with Melvyn Evans Motorsport team-mate Osian Pryce, M-Sport's Rhys Yates and Matthew Wilson and Irishmen Sam Moffett and Keith Cronin among his biggest rivals.

Cathan McCourt, Jason Mitchell and Tom Williams join the chase this weekend, but Frank Bird is again absent as his Fiesta Rally2 still hasn't been delivered from M-Sport.

Junior BRC benchmark William Creighton skips the Grampian with a clashing Junior WRC commitment, leaving round two victor Ruairi Bell and Scotsman Finlay Retson as class favourites. Elliot Payne and Garry Pearson are likely contenders in the National battle.

SCOTTISH OUTING HELPED REGAIN WILSON'S CONFIDENCE

James Wilson is confident of an upturn in performance in the British Rally Championship following an encouraging run on the recent Scottish Rally.

Wilson has endured a troubled start to his BRC campaign, finishing 10th and 11th on the opening two rounds. He and Arthur Kierans therefore entered the Scottish in a bid to boost seat time and familiarisation with Scottish gravel, with the next round of the BRC – the Grampian Forest Rally – based in Aberdeenshire. The Hyundai i20 R5 pair finished fifth but had been as high as third.

"The plan was to try and get a decent finish where we can maybe become a bit more recognised in England, Scotland, Wales where our seeding will become a bit better," Wilson told MN. "Having fun with it is the most important thing but just getting some seat time and experience is really the main aim, and learning the car too, getting more dialled into set-up and things like that. Just building experience."

Wilson is now encouraged that he can get closer to the frontrunning pace on the Grampian, and he has an ace card up his sleeve. "Arthur has won it with Barry McKenna so at least he has good knowledge of it," he said. "I think I've got my confidence back after that last one there [the Scottish] so we'll just go and attack it and see what happens."

Wilson is upbeat after his outing on the Scottish Rally

Competitors on the Loughgall will forego closed roads

NI'S LOUGHGALL RALLY TO REMAIN A SINGLE VENUE IN 2021

This month's Loughgall Stages Rally will not include a closed-road stage as had originally been planned, meaning the third round of the Northern Ireland Rally Championship will be a single-venue meeting.

The decision has been blamed on strict social distancing rules that remain in place in Northern Ireland. Every stage on the August 21 event will now use lanes and link roads within the Loughgall Country Park.

In all, the competitive distance will total 20 miles.

Clerk of the course William Fullerton explained: "We had originally planned to include a closed-road stage – but due to Covid restrictions imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive, unfortunately we couldn't make it work.

"Instead, we will run two stages within the confines of the country park, which crews will tackle three times."

Fullerton also confirmed that spectators will be allowed through the venue's gates, although exact numbers have still to be announced by North Armagh Motor Club. Admission is £10 for adults and includes a programme, while accompanied children under 16 go free.

The latest advice from Sport NI states that anyone attending a sports event must test for coronavirus before they attend, and on days two and eight after the event takes place.

This year is the first that the Loughgall Stages has been included in the NI series as it was previously a two-wheel-drive only event. Damian Toner has won the last four editions in the Ford Escort Mk2.

SCOT STEWART KEEN TO TURN HEADS IN RALLY4 PEUGEOT

Scottish driver Peter Stewart reckons there will be plenty of eyes on his Grampian Forest Rally performance this weekend after his strong debut in Peugeot's 208 Rally4.

Stewart, along with his father Richard, gave the 208 its UK and Irish debut on the Scottish Rally last month and finished 18th overall. He was left very impressed with his new machine.

He told MN: "Honestly it's awesome. I still can't get over the way it comes out the corners for a front-wheel drive. It feels four-wheel drive, the way it grips and the way it handles. I think it'll take four or five rallies to get used to the car so if I can get used to it and pedal it like I pedalled my [Fiesta] ST many years ago we'll be laughing."

Stewart joked that his debut might help Peugeot sales a little bit. "I don't think [Fiesta car-builder] M-Sport will be too chuffed!" he added, given his lack of familiarity with the car.

"I'll probably bin it on the first corner - I hope not though.

"I think there will be a lot of people watching the result, probably Peugeot and M-Sport will be the two, because there's a lot of BRC drivers that'll be doing it," Stewart added. "It'll maybe turn a few more heads, we'll see what happens."

Stewart will be in the spotlight in Rally4 this weekend

RALLY NEWS

MN CIRCUIT CALENDAR REVEALED

The dates and schedules for the upcoming 2021/22 Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship season have been revealed, featuring a two-day event at Anglesey.

The season begins with the Neil Howard Stages at Oulton before usual trips to Cadwell Park, Donginton Park, Brands Hatch, Snetteron and a repeat visit to Donington and Cadwell.

The Anglesey round in late January will be the first MNCRC rally since Rockingham in 2016 to run across two days. The Lee Holland and SMC Stages ran as a double-header back in July.

MNCRC co-ordinator Darren Spann explained: "It's about returning to normality but at the same time continuing to improve. One key thing that's come out of our Covid season is the two-day event at Anglesey was very welcome."

Series organisers confirmed there will no longer be a self-refuelling option on events.

CALENDAR

MNCRC 2021/22

DATE	VENUE
Nov 6	Oulton Park
Nov 21	Cadwell Park
Dec 5	Donington Park
Jan 15	Brands Hatch
Jan 29-30	Anglesey
Feb 19	Snetterton
Mar 6	Donington Park
Apr 3	Cadwell Park

JENNINGS' CLOSE SHAVE FOR CHARITY

British Rally Championship contender faces the scissors in an effort to raise cash

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Colin Casserley, Roy Dempster

Jennings will get a close crop

By Luke Barry

British Rally Championship runner Garry Jennings is cutting his famously long hair for charity, aiming to raise £10,000 for down syndrome charities.

Dubbed '10 inches for £10,000', Jennings is doing it for his local Kesh Community Carnival that will take place on Saturday August 21.

Jennings told the Absolute Rally podcast: "The local community here, the wee village that I live in which I own a pub in, hold a festival every year but obviously with Covid there's been no festival now for two years, and we were all talking about something exciting to bring people out on the Saturday night and do something different.

"I think I made a suggestion before I'd thought about it and it just really spiralled from there, and within five minutes there was a Go Fund Me page set up."

Jennings, who will compete on the Grampian Forest Rally this weekend, admitted there are competition benefits to losing his hair too: "To be fair it's probably getting a bit uncomfortable now," he said. "Obviously we're done some BRC rounds at the minute and I'm telling you when you tuck it up into the helmet sometimes it's like carrying a couple of stone on your head, so I think it's about time it came off!"

Donations can be made by visiting. gofundme.com/10-inches-for-10000.

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Flynn and Jones squeak a Pennine victory

The superior grip of their Subaru Impreza aided Matt Flynn/Rob Bryn Jones to a narrow win on the Pennine Trophy Targa on August 1.

The event consisted of 15 tests, mainly farm tracks and quarries, at eight different venues. All but one test was on gravel.

Fastest on the first test, John Haygarth/Bob Hargreaves (Opel Kadett GT/E) suffered a puncture on Test 2, then another on Test 3 and one more on Test 4. Having run out of spare tyres, they were forced to withdraw.

They were not alone; seven crews picked up punctures at the entrance to the tunnel on Test 4 at Browsber.

It was Daniel Jones/Sion Rowlands who took over the lead in their Mazda MX-5. They retained that position until Test 12, at the end of which they were nine seconds ahead of the field.

Unfortunately, they were awarded a wrong test on Test 13; this meant that they ended the event in sixth place.

With two tests remaining, Flynn/Jones, who had never been far behind the leaders, found themselves in front. They were chased hard over the final sections by Kevin Savage/Philip Savage, however the latter's Suzuki Ignis couldn't quite overcome the four-wheel traction of the winning Subaru Impreza.

Ian Mills

Results

Pennine Trophy Targa
Organiser: Airedale & Pennine MCC and Clitheroe DMC **When:** August 1 **Where:** Northern Lancashire **Route:** 15 Tests **Starters:** 44.
1 Matt Flynn/Rob Bryn Jones (Subaru Impreza STi) 24m 52s; 2 Kevin Savage/Philip Savage (Suzuki Ignis Sport) +12s; 3 Stephen Short/James Greenhough (Proton Coupe); 4 David Pedley/Grace Pedley (Mazda MX-5); 5 Matthew Hewlett/Callum Briggs (Peugeot 106 GTi); 6 Daniel Jones/Sion Rowlands (Mazda MX-5); 7 John Gornall/Martin Gornall (Peugeot 206 GTi); 8 Kevin Easterbrook/Alan Ison (MX5); 9 Steve Cotton/Rod Carter (Impreza); 10 Quentin James/Thomas Howe (Citroen C2 GT).
Class winners: Semi-Experts: Jones/Rowlands; **Novices:** Hewlett/Briggs; **Historic:** Stephen Byrne/David Byrne (Austin Healey Sprite).

DOG LEAP RALLY: BY JASON CRAIG — AUGUST 7

HENRY UPSETS THE FORMBOOK WITH DOG LEAP TRIUMPH

Desi Henry claimed an unlikely victory on round two the Northern Ireland Rally Championship at the Dog Leap Rally when perennial leader Jonathan Greer picked up a puncture on the final special stage.

Greer appeared odds-on to make it back-to-back wins – but his 10.2-second lead evaporated early in the closing test at Shackleton when he clouted a pothole with the front-left wheel on his Citroen C3 R5.

It was cruel luck for the 2017 champion, who had expertly managed hanging dust clouds, sporadic rain showers and backmarkers around the expansive venue alongside Kirsty Riddick up to that point.

Henry was perfectly placed to capitalise on the Carryduff driver's misfortune and finished with nearly half-a-minute in hand over Aaron McLaughlin, the winner of the Dog Leap Rally from two seasons ago.

It could have been very different, however, after Henry emerged from the fourth stage with plumes of steam spewing out of his bonnet after he smacked the front of his Hyundai against a bale chicane.

Defending Northern Ireland champion Stephen Wright recovered from a high-speed spin on the very first stage that demoted him to eighth. However, he picked up the pace to lockout the podium places.

Barry Morris did not put a wheel wrong all day in his ultra-rapid Darrian T90 GT+ to dominate the two-wheel-drive race. His margin of victory at the end of the day stood at over one-and-a-half-minutes. Joel Eakin secured the Showroom Class honours and Andy Johnson the historic class bragging rights.

Henry was in the prime spot to pick up a rally win

Results

Organiser: Maiden City Motor Club **When:** August 7 **Where:** Shackleton, Ballykelly, County Londonderry Championships: McGrady Insurance Northern Ireland Rally Championship **Starters:** 92 **Stages:** 6
1 Desi Henry/Mark Henry (Hyundai i20 R5) 42m 55.2s; 2 Aaron McLaughlin/Darren Curran (Ford Fiesta R5) + 29s; 3 Stephen Wright/Liam Moynihan (Ford Fiesta R5); 4 Jonathan Greer/Kirsty Riddick (Citroen C3 R5);5 Jason Mitchell/Peter Ward (Ford Fiesta R5); 6 Derek McGeehan/Mark McGeehan (Mini WRC); 7 Derek McGarrity/Paddy Robinson (Ford Fiesta WRC); 8 Barry Morris/Dylan Doonan (Darrian T90 GT+); 9 Peadar Hurson/Damien Connolly (Ford Fiesta WRC); 10 Ian Millar/Ronan O'Neill (Ford Fiesta R5). **Class winners:** Andy Johnson/Patrick Johnson (Vauxhall Chevette HSR); Joel Eakin/Sean Doherty (Honda Civic Type R); Philip White/Brian Rowan (Nissan Micra); Jody McManus/Connor Duffy (Ford Fiesta R2); Anthony McCann/Damian McCann (Ford Escort Mk2); John Bradley/Crawford Henderson (Ford Escort Mk2); Morris/Doonan; 8. Andrew Bustard/Kenny Bustard (Mitsubishi Lancer); Paul McKenna/Niall McKenna (Mitsubishi Lancer E6); Greer/Riddick; HenryHenry

BRISCA F1: SKEGNESS BY COLIN CASSERLEY — AUGUST 7

HARRIS SETS HIMSELF UP FOR WORLD FINAL WITH SKEGNESS SEMI FINAL GLORY

Tom Harris moved a step closer to retaining his World title, which will be contested for at Bradford in September, with a dominating drive in Saturday night's semi-final at Skegness.

Harris started on pole and was never challenged during the 20-lap race that went non-stop from green to chequered flag. Harris was followed into Turn 1 by outside front row sitter Lee Fairhurst. Behind them, Ryan Harrison barged his was into third from fifth on the grid on the opening lap with Nigel Green slotting into fourth.

The top four positions remained static throughout the race. In the battle for the qualifying positions, Mark Sargent, Mark Woodhull and Tyrone Evans tangled exiting Turn 2 ending their chances of making the World Final.

Simon Traves crossed the line in eighth place to qualify for his first World Final. John Dowson, Jr, who normally only races on shale, crossed the line in 12th to claim the last qualifying spot. "Not bad for a 20-year-old shale car," smiled Dowson after the race.

Winner Tom Harris said afterwards: "[That was] a fantastic race for me personally, but probably boring for the fans to watch, but it was the race I wanted. I just hope we can put a show on for all the fans at Bradford."

Fairhurst said: "After a few laps the race settled down and it was hard to make any ground, but I also didn't lose any, I will take second and that gives me a chance at Bradford."

Results

Organiser: Skegness Raceway BriSCA F1 **When:** August 7 **Where:** Skegness Stadium **Starters:** 67
1 Tom Harris; 2 Lee Fairhurst; 3 Ryan Harrison; 4 Nigel Green; 5 Paul Hines; 6 Karl Hawkins; 7 Frankie Wainman Junior Jr; 8 Simon Traves; 9 Chris Cowley; 10 Liam Gilbank; 11 Ashley England; 12 John Dowson Jr.

Harris, right, has earned a front-row start for big final

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Rising British star hails effort of team after another grand prix podium finish
NORRIS: HOMEWORK HAS PAID OFF FOR McLAREN
Briton has high hopes for Silverstone
By Matt James
Lando Norris has credited the work done by his McLaren team as the young Briton stunned with his pace at the Red Bull Ring last weekend with another podium finish.
He started on the front row in Austria and battled on genuine pace with the Mercedes duo of Valtteri Bottas and Lewis Hamilton. He eventually finished third, and that was despite a five-second penalty for early-race contact with Red Bull's Sergio Perez. The race was won by Max Verstappen's Red Bull.
Norris said: "We did make a step forward and I think the car was definitely better and nicer to drive, both in qualifying and the longevity of a race. I think just the conditions also helped and our approach to the strategy was a little bit different this weekend compared to the last one after doing our homework and learning from a few things to try to improve on."
Norris's next race will be in front of a packed house at Silverstone on July 18.
P1report, page four
Norris was right in the mix with Merc in Austria
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HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB

GARY THOMAS

Road Sports convert
Age: 58 **Lives:** Nottingham

Thomas: hillclimbing passion

He did a lot on the hills
"I did around 16 or 17 years of hillclimbing and had some fairly quick single-seaters. I got fastest time of the day at Shelsley Walsh five times and I had two Forces, an 1100 and then a 1400. I'm chief instructor at the hillclimb school at Shelsley."

He made the switch to circuit racing
"I sold the Force at the end of 2017 and bought this Lotus 7 Series 2 in order to compete in circuit racing. I didn't know which championship I'd do as I bought the car and then went and looked for a championship. I found 70s Road Sports and it fitted in there. I'd always wanted to go back to circuit racing because many years ago I'd raced in Formula Ford before I got married, because I was going to be World champion!"

He started racing in 2019
"I've done two and a half seasons now. I did a part season in 2019 and then last season. But actually, I was missing hillclimbing because there are definitely different pressures in hillclimbing. And everyone thinks that circuit racing is more pressured. But I think you're under more pressure on the hills."

Hills are a challenge
"Because they run in number order you've got to be ready to perform throughout the day. So that's why I think there's more pressure in hillclimbing and I love it. Also the fact that you've got to assume that everybody else in your class is going quicker than you because you can't see them. Whereas in circuit racing, hopefully, you can see the people around you. So if you make a mistake, you have got chance to put it right."

He likes both disciplines
"I'm really enjoying the racing. 70s Road Sports is a really good series and, as with most forms of motorsport, it's about the people. And they're a great bunch of people. So I'll do more racing and the occasional hillclimb. I'll do events like Classic Nostalgia because I'm a real enthusiast and I love to see all of this sort of stuff and the fact that I have a car in a paddock like that is just wonderful. I did the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power for a couple of years and it was great to be part of it."

Two Historic F2 races have been added to Gold Cup event

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Formula 2 at Oulton Park has 60-year-plus heritage

FORMULA 2 ENTRIES FLOOD IN FOR GOLD CUP CONTEST

Single-seater category gets a chance to make up for missed rounds

By Paul Lawrence

Historic Formula 2 cars will star at the Oulton Park Gold Cup on August 28-30 after two races for the cars of the 1970s were added to the programme to replace lost mainland Europe events.

Following the ongoing disruption to the planned international calendar for Historic F2, the Historic Sports Car Club has added two races for the series into the hugely popular Gold Cup meeting at the Cheshire track. The aggregate winner from the two races will be presented with the prestigious and valuable Gold Cup trophy.

The field of pre '79 Formula 2 and Formula Atlantic cars will have qualifying on Saturday followed by races on Sunday and Monday. The first 16 entries were placed within 24 hours of the race being announced and a bumper entry is expected. Among them will be local ace Callum Grant in his giant-killing Formula Atlantic March 79B.

Andy Dee-Crowne of the HSCC said: "Our planned pan-European season for Historic F2 has been badly hit by Covid and the resulting travel restrictions, so we are pleased to add two races at Oulton Park. We'd love to see some of our European racers at Oulton Park if they are able to travel. We also look forward to resuming a full European schedule for Historic F2 in 2022."

Formula 2 has been part of the Oulton Park story for more than 60 years and the original Gold Cup was run for F2 cars several times, with notable winners being Jack Brabham (1957 and '64) and John Surtees (1965).

CATON RETURNS CLASSIC LOTUS ESPRIT TO THE RACE CIRCUIT

Greg Caton got to grips with the rare Group 5 Lotus Esprit

The rare Group 5 Lotus Esprit raced by Richard Jenvey in the World Sportscar Championship 40 years ago returned to racing in the UK during The Classic at Silverstone recently.

The Lotus, which featured March F2 suspension, was built and raced internationally by Jenvey in 1979 and 1980 but struggled for reliability and the project was eventually scrapped.

It was later sold after many years in storage and acquired by Ken Baird who handed it to Greg Caton and his team at G-Cat Racing. The body moulds were recovered from a garden.

An extensive rebuild was finally completed in time for it to contest several CER races in mainland Europe in 2019 but the Thundersports race at the Classic was its first UK race for 40 years. Caton took it to an impressive GT class-winning fifth in the rain-hit race.

Wrigley goes long in Endurance Legends

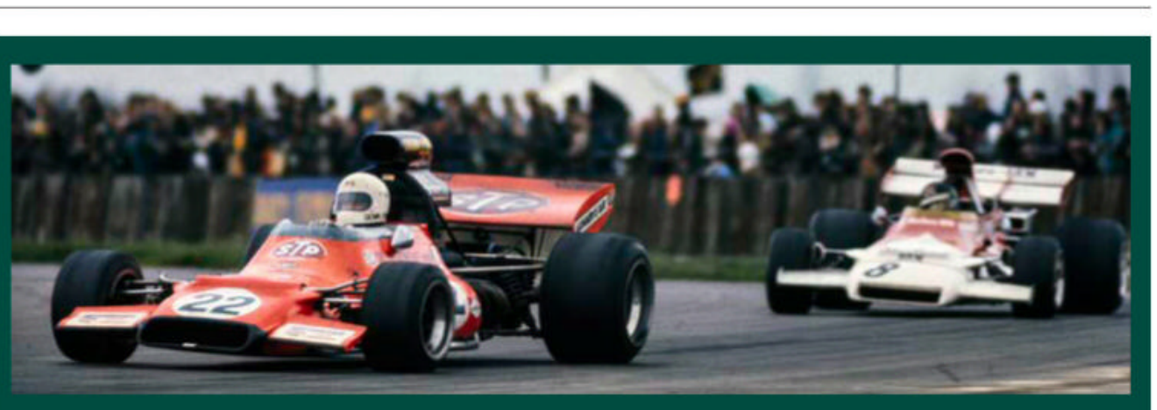
Prolific historic single-seater racer Matt Wrigley made his Endurance Legends debut at Silverstone in the Dallara DO-05 of Christophe d'Ansembourg.

With the car's owner absent due to Covid restrictions, Wrigley was offered the chance to race the car that is prepared by CGA in the UK.

"It's very, very quick, and it's completely different to anything I've raced before, but it seemed to go well," said Historic F2 frontrunner Wrigley. He qualified a fine third on Friday but was thwarted by car issues in the two races.

Elsewhere over the weekend, Wrigley took an F2 win in his March 782 and shared an E-type with his father Mike in the E-type 60th anniversary race

Wrigley: happy with his showing



FLYING KIWI GRAHAM McRAE PASSES AWAY

Motorsport News was sorry to learn of the death, at 81, of New Zealand racer and constructor Graham McRae after a long illness. McRae was best known for his success in Formula 5000 at home, in the UK and America. His own McRae cars enjoyed great success in the early 1970s and he won titles in New Zealand and North America. He also started one grand prix but his race in the Williams Iso at Silverstone in 1973 ended on the first lap.

LIVINGSTON'S PODIUM ON FORMULA JUNIOR DEBUT

Reigning Historic Formula Ford champion Pierre Livingston made his Formula Junior debut at the Classic Silverstone and claimed a podium finish in the second race.

Livingston, who had not raced otherwise this season, has been studying in France but is now back in the UK and took the opportunity to rejoin Mike O'Brien's Speedsport team to race its Lotus 22.

"I'd never driven it in the wet before and I just wanted to keep the car in one piece," said Livingston.

He hopes to be out again later in the season and further his ambition to race modern GT cars. But another run in the Lotus at the Oulton Park Gold Cup is possible.

IN BRIEF

Thomas honour
Robert Oldershaw Jr honoured the memory of Martin Thomas in the Historic Touring Car Challenge at Silverstone. Oldershaw was racing the Rover Vitesse that Thomas built and raced in the early 1980s. Oldershaw bought the car from Thomas last year and he attended their first test session. Sadly, Thomas died earlier this year and was remembered by a sticker on some of the cars.

Cuff scuppered
Rory Cuff, the 23-year-old son of former single-seater star David, elected not to make his planned historic racing debut at Silverstone and will now share the BMW M3 touring car with his father at a later date. Cuff, who has raced in the Mini Challenge, tested on Friday but got so few laps that he decided to let dad race solo. "I needed a few more laps to do the car justice, so we'll look for another chance," he said.

Turner is a guest
Colin Turner, the Formula Ford racer who lost both legs in an accident at the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone last November, was a guest at The Classic at Silverstone. With support from Nigel and Callum Grant, Turner was able to return to the track and meet some of the marshals who were on hand at his accident. The 70-year-old Scot is determined to return to racing before too long.

Berg makes bow
Danish racer Kore Berg made his Silverstone debut at The Classic in his Formula 2 March 722. Berg and his team made a mammoth journey from Denmark to be at Silverstone and it was his first taste of racing the car and racing at Silverstone. "We hope to do a full Historic F2 season in 2022," said Berg who also has a later March 822, which would be eligible for the HSCC's Geoff Lees Trophy.

Besleys in battle
Father and son Crispian and Charlie Besley raced against each other for the first time at The Classic at Silverstone, when they both contested the Formula Junior races. Crispian raced his regular Cooper as 22-year-old Charlie took up an invitation to race the Elva 100 of John Arnold, normally seen in the hands of Niall Murray. Charlie and his brother Hugo also shared the family Sports 2000 Tiga in the Thundersports race.

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FEATURE

WHY THE WRC BATTLERS WILL HAVE THEIR EYES OPENED THIS WEEKEND

Be in no doubt: Ypres brings a bona fide classic to the WRC calendar, says Nick Garton

Huge atmosphere surrounds Ypres Rally

The spotlight will be on the home-town star, Theirry Neuville

Sebastien Ogier (l) and Elfyn Evans will head up the Toyota attack

News that Ypres would join the World Rally Championship trail in last year's Covid-revised calendar was one of the high points of that wretched period, offering the biggest possible platform to one of Europe's great closed-road rallies.

The 2020 fixture fell casualty to Europe's post-summer explosion in coronavirus cases, but it has retained a slot on the calendar for 2021 and it should be a cause for jubilation like no other in the recent history of the WRC because this is going to be an experience to savour.

The event was founded in 1965, when Jean-Pierre Vandermeersch took victory in a Mini Cooper, the first of 11 successive home wins before Walter Rohrl beat the locals at the wheel of an Opel Kadett in 1976. It is a hugely popular event for British rally crews and fans alike but only three Brits have ever won outright: Tony Pond (twice), Jimmy McRae and Kris Meeke, whose 2009 victory caused a sensation as he outpaced 11-time winner Freddy Loix in identical Kronos-run Peugeot 207s.

Ypres is fast. The roads may be narrow, but they are as smooth as silk, certainly in comparison with most British B-roads, and encourage drivers to find a little more with every passing mile. The countryside undulates gently, and it is wide open arable land that offers fans an unprecedented vista on almost every stage. They also lure drivers to their doom in ditches that can often swallow a car whole.

Don't just take MN's word for it, though. To help preview the Ypres experience, we enlisted the help of a man who has been an integral part of the Ypres Rally story: 1987 winner, Jimmy McRae.

"A lot of people complain that it's not the best roads and it's a lot of straights and square rights and square lefts but it's still a big challenge, actually – especially if it's wet!" says the great patriarch of Britain's most celebrated rally dynasty.

"It's a place where you have to be tidy because, if you're not, you'll end up in one of the ditches."

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the McRae family's links to the Ypres Rally, when Jimmy went over the water armed with an Opel Ascona, eager to see what the event had in store.

"I first went there in 1981, when we finished second," says McRae. "It was basically a deal I put together myself with the clerk of the course at the time who managed to get us the sponsors to get the car over there and the atmosphere is second to none. I just fell in love with the rally.

"At that time, I was just doing the British championship, basically, and looking for anything else that I could put together was of interest. It was always quite easy to find sponsors for Ypres, where one year I had a cigarette company, another year a watch company, who would pay to get the car across. Normally it was a free entry and free hotels and the enthusiasm was just unbelievable."

Jimmy McRae is a big Ypres fan

Be in no doubt that the WRC is about to witness one of the most intense outpourings of national pride and passion seen since Jimmy's son Colin raised the rafters along every mile of his win on the 1997 RAC: his first trip home since sealing the World championship in 1995.

That sort of fervour is something that the Belgians are more than capable of matching and, in Thierry Neuville, they have a star for whom they know that victory is very much there for the taking.

When Neuville took Hyundai's first WRC win on the 2014 Rallye Deutschland there was barely a German to be found on the stages; it was a Belgian invasion in which the vineyards seemed more like a football terrace on which everyone was in the home end.

"It will definitely be special for the fans with Neuville in contention," McRae confirms. "It's just a big party. There are so many good Belgian drivers for the crowds to get behind: rallying's such a special part of life to them."

Not that Neuville can expect to have things all his own way. The Hyundai

> ***"The fans will make the event magic"***
>
> ***Jimmy McRae***

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

McRae made Ypres debut in 1981

Meeke triumphed in dramatic 2009 run

i20 WRC is a car that is as gravel-honed as the Ford Escort was in the 1970s, whereas the deft little Toyota Yaris might have been purpose-built with the roads of Flanders in mind. Add in asphalt aces like Sebastien Ogier and Elfyn Evans in the Toyota camp and Neuville's path to glory looks steeper still.

M-Sport will quite rightly be putting its faith in Adrien Fourmaux and he, in turn, will have privately set fourth place as the minimum outcome to hope for from this event, although the French rookie will doubtless be disappointed with anything less than a podium.

The only other man with skin in the game when it comes to the podium positions is Craig Breen, winner of the last running of the Ypres event in 2019 at the wheel of a Volkswagen Polo R5 after Neuville crashed out. The Irishman did most of Hyundai's prep work for the cancelled 2020 event and he is hungry to show that he is a man for all surfaces as he bids for a full-time WRC ride in 2022.

"Neuville's obviously got home advantage and he's a former winner of the event," says McRae, sizing up the contenders. "Seb hasn't done Ypres before, but you never worry too much about him acclimatizing. Elfyn's very, very good on Tarmac and I believe he's done one or two Belgian events, so he'll know what it's about. It will be very interesting to see how it all goes."

Oliver Solberg needs to deliver

That's five men gunning for the three podium places before you even think of Ott Tanak or Kalle Rovanpera, who will likely be a touch further outside their comfort zone than either man will care to admit. Their performances are likely to be measured against that of the ever-improving Takamoto Katsuta in Toyota's fourth car, rather than the Ogiers and Neuvilles of the world.

Another man with a huge point to prove will be Oliver Solberg, back in Rally2 machinery without need to worry about the category's leading lights of Andreas Mikkelsen or Mads Ostberg, who are absent. The teenage star has only to beat one driver among Nikolay Gryazin, Jari Huttunen and Teemu Suninen to be assured of a podium which, given the level of expectation that his supporters have heaped upon him, is desperately needed after multiple retirements this year.

In WRC3, Citroen's Yohan Rossel is expected to set the pace, back on asphalt after wins on the snow in Monte Carlo and on the super-heated gravel of Portugal. French drivers treat Tarmac as their domain but Rossel will have to contend with a raft of local hotshoes armed with the potent Skoda Fabia R5.

The Czech marque is using the weekend to celebrate 120 years of motorsport history and, having won seven out of the last 10 editions of the Ypres Rally, there will be plenty of optimism towards increasing their victory tally.

Certainly, having most of the local talent carrying the winged arrow will be an asset on stages that can punish drivers very quickly, as McRae points out.

"If it's wet it is always very, very tricky," he counsels. "The surface is quite unique and it takes a little while to work out your braking distances. Then of course when people cut corners you find it is awash with mud.

"If it's pure wet then you can adapt quickly and know what to expect but if the conditions are changeable, wet and dry, it's even more difficult because then the Tarmac dries quickly but often you find that the mud that's been dragged onto the junctions is still incredibly slippy. I'd say that it's probably been 50-50 wet weather and sunshine across all my trips to Ypres."

As ever, Ypres will usher forth a hugely varied entry throughout the starting line-up and there will be plenty to look out for. A host of seven RGT Alpines will make a wonderfully evocative sight in their class with veteran Marc Duez, a former rival of Jimmy McRae, vying with Neuville for the most fan support on the event, while in the showroom NRGT class there will be six Porsche 911s making their sonorously rapid way around the route.

Add in a brace of Abarth 500s, a wealth of Renault Clios plus a smattering of quirky rally-prepared Renault Twingos and Opel Adams, and you have the very essence of what makes Ypres such a remarkable event for impartial observers to enjoy. Variety is the spice of life, and just an added element on top of one of the great weekends for European rallying, as Jimmy McRae confirms.

"It's always good in the pub afterwards over there," he chuckles. "I've seen daylight coming in over the square quite often on the morning after the rally. It's just the atmosphere, I think a lot of people just go there for the beer and the cars are sort of second to that!" ■

Local hero Thierry Neuville crashed out in 2019 edition of the event

McRae's famous Ypres Victory

For someone who held such fondness for the event, it took even a talent of Jimmy McRae's magnitude some time to master Ypres. His one overall victory came in 1987 at the wheel of RED's legendary Ford Sierra Cosworth, D541 UVW. In that car, McRae and co-driver Ian Grindrod had already claimed victory on the Circuit of Ireland and then came glory in Flanders.

"We'd already had a second place in Ypres [in 1985, driving an Opel Manta], a couple of fifths, a third and a fourth I think, so you sort of felt 'we've got to get this at some point!'

"Our approach was to take it as it comes, it was a pretty dry event that year. The one scary moment was that we needed to change the turbo, back then we could service between stages as well, and we managed to change the turbo but as I drove off one of the mechanics just toppled over with fatigue and he hadn't been drinking enough water in the heat and what have you.

"I saw him go and I said 'oh, bloody hell!' but didn't go back and check, I thought he'd be alright. The win helped his recovery a bit, I'm sure!"

In 1988, partnered by Rob Arthur, McRae and D541 UVW would claim another Circuit of Ireland, together with the Scottish and Ulster rallies, before Jimmy's oldest son Colin took over the car mid-way through 1989, ending the year with a redesigned shell after an off on the RAC.

More Ypres success would follow for Jimmy, however, as to date he has claimed three class wins on the historic event supporting the main rally, most recently in 2015, back where it all began 40 years ago at the wheel of his Opel Ascona. Meanwhile, D541 UVW has been restored to her best as well.

McRae and his famous Sierra would manage to conquer Ypres

Some of the Flanders fields are hard to escape if things go wrong

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

BRITISH GT REPORT: SNETTERTON

IN BRIEF

Fletcher flies
Kelvin Fletcher and Martin Plowman in their Paddock Motorsport Bentley bagging their first GT3 podium owed in part to a technical rethink. "We've gone in a different direction this weekend with a new engineer and a new way to engineer the car and it seems to have worked," Fletcher told MN. "We've had the pace, the potential, we've just not [before] quite had the rub of the green."

Igoe ignites
The WPI Lamborghini duo Michael Igoe and Phil Keen were potent throughout the Snetterton weekend, and never more so then late on in race two when third-placed Igoe on the largely dried track tore around three seconds a lap from the two cars ahead. "Another lap and we would have been on Adam [Balon]," Igoe told MN. "The car felt great. I always warm to the greasy conditions, it's definitely my favourite."

Keen on standards
Igoe's stablemate Keen took it on the chin however when Igoe got the car a race-one 10s stop-go penalty after hitting the back of Fletcher's Bentley, even though it was misjudgement rather than malice and the car didn't benefit. Keen told MN: "They're trying to clamp down on contact, so yes it's a harsh penalty but we need to stop people from crashing into each other. It's been banger racer [recently] hasn't it?"

Parker problem
Team Parker's Porsche 911 duo Nick Jones and Scott Malvern endured more frustration at Snetterton. After the team performed brilliantly to reshell the car in two days after its Spa smash, Norfolk's race day was largely a wipeout due to a sensor issue the team couldn't resolve despite an entire day of effort. "We showed how quick we could be when it was wet in FP2," Malvern added.

Burton bold
Despite Will Burns and Gus Burton in their Century BMW having a clear lead in GT4's standings, Burton insists playing safe for points is not the way to wrap up the title: "As soon as you start to think about that you start losing the championship. Just take it race by race; finish the highest position we can. We'll think about the championship when it's won.

Ginetta promise
Charlie Robertson had the blow of dropping out of race two early, but took encouragement from his Assetto Ginetta's pace in taking pole position for that counter. "That's the thing, we had good pace this weekend and the car felt mega," he told MN, "but it's a learning year for the team, and it's hard to take now but I'm sure in two days we'll be fine and get going."

Roberston is encouraged

Buurman made stunning start

One-off TF pair dictated race 1

SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW PREVAIL AT SNETTERTON

TF Sport's one-off effort and a long-awaited triumph for Loggie and Buurman's RAM Mercedes shared the GT3 wins in an eventful meeting, by Graham Keilloh

In British GT one has to be prepared for anything. And the Snetterton double header meeting last weekend showcased the range. Sharing its GT3 wins were new kids here for one round only, and championship fixtures bagging a long-awaited victory.

With echoes of 2 Seas' run at Silverstone earlier this year, in Norfolk a one-off GT3 entry immediately dominated. This time it was familiar multiple champion TF Sport returning with its Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage Pro-Am pairing Ahmad Al Harthy and Charlie Eastwood.

With race one's grid set by the 'Am' drivers' qualifying session, Al Harthy was imperious, taking pole by 0.8 seconds. And the subsequent race was similar, as he edged clear in first then passed the car to Eastwood who did much the same. The Vantage's lead was 8s by the end.

Al Harthy also was quick to point out he also had impediments, as this was his first time behind the wheel since February in the Asian Le Mans Series.

"In many years of me racing this has been the longest I've been away from the car," he told Motorsport News, "so delighted to be where we are. I had one of the best qualifying sessions that I can remember in terms of getting the absolute peak out of the car.

"To achieve the win after being away for such a long time means a lot to me. We had a clean start and just put our head down to make sure that my racecraft is where I left it."

Second home, and first in the points with the TF Vantage not scoring, was none other than Kelvin Fletcher and Martin Plowman's Paddock Bentley taking their first ever overall GT3 podium. Fletcher was an impressive best of the rest in qualifying and in the race he then Plowman stayed in second, never letting the Vantage get too far ahead.

They just beat the closing Dennis Lind/Leo Machitski Barwell Lamborghini, with Lind undertaking one of his trademark thrilling charging stints in the race's second half.

In the GT4 contest the Team Rocket RJN McLarens continued their recent improvement and Alain Valente took pole and led until he got a puncture. "I didn't hit anything so maybe some debris on the track [caused it]. We could have won it easily," he told MN.

That let the championship-leading Will Burns/Gus Burton Century BMW into first, but it was being shadowed by another RJN McLaren, of James Kell. And the BMW lost the lead to the McLaren in the pitstop round via the former's success penalty.

Jordan Collard took over from Kell and streaked away to win, leaving behind a fevered four-car scrap wherein Burton pipped for second the Lind-aping Scott McKenna having a second-stint charge in his Speedworks Toyota Supra.

Collard told MN: "It's been a tough year so far and this is massive testament to RJN, they've had a lot of work to do the last couple of weeks after Spa [when Kell crashed the McLaren]. They've never ran the GT4 McLaren before [2021] so there's a little bit of growing pains, but we're picking up momentum now."

GT3's race two, like race one, was dominated by a single car. But this time it was one of the establishment: Ian Loggie and Yelmer Buurman's RAM Mercedes at last winning as a pair.

Buurman only just missed out on race-two pole, ruing a sub-optimum lap, but was confident in the car's race pace wet or dry, and this proved handy. The weather was grumpy all weekend and a cloudburst before the start ensured race two would be wet but drying. And Buurman immediately asserted himself, moving past poleman Lind on the outside of the streaming opening turn to lead.

"I knew I had basically one chance because once you're behind in the spray it's real difficult to overtake," Buurman told MN. "It was trusting on him keeping the car under control but Dennis is a great driver. And then I managed to check out basically."

Indeed. The move alone got Buurman several lengths clear and he continued to scamper away at a similar rate, even after a safety car threatened to wipe his lead. He had an 8s advantage by the time he handed over to Loggie.

By then their nearest challenge was the Sandy Mitchell/Adam Balon Barwell Lamborghini as Lind's sister car dropped back as its set-up didn't suit the conditions.

It looked like Balon would make a race of it in stint two as he trimmed Loggie's advantage, but come the end Loggie still had 4.6s in hand. It also made up somewhat for Buurman picking up a race-one puncture.

Balon told MN: "We probably got the pressures wrong for the end of the race, they got slightly high and lost the grip. At that point I thought I don't want to bin it and settled for second."

The second GT4 race meanwhile was the latest British GT bout framed by an early-race clash. On the skating-rink surface on lap 1 McKenna tapped Darren Turner's Vantage at Wilson hairpin, giving the latter a puncture. McKenna ran wide and as he accelerated back towards the action poleman Charlie Robertson's Ginetta, Jake Giddings' Ciceley Mercedes and McKenna came together. All three were out and Robertson got a grid drop for the next round.

Collard led the opening stint but dropped back serving his race-one success penalty. It therefore looked like Burns/Burton would once again prevail via staying out of trouble, but the BMW then was slapped with a drivethrough penalty for a too-short pitstop. "Our delta was wrong, it didn't have the success penalty in it from the race before," Burton explained to MN. "That should have been an easy win."

It let the Matt Cowley/Will Moore Academy Ford Mustang become another long-awaited winner. The Mustang was an outside title contender last year but has struggled for results in 2021.

Cowley told MN: "The car was mega in the rain and as the track got drier we got quicker. The car's been on song all year, it's just been external factors and bad luck that have put us where we are."

"I had one chance to pass, then I checked out"

Yelmer Buurman

Collard confirmed McLaren turn

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

GB3 REPORT BY GRAHAM KEILLOH

BEARMAN STARS AS O'SULLIVAN GROWS LEAD

The peripatetic and prodigious Oliver Bearman, when he's not routinely bagging wins this year in the ADAC and Italian Formula 4 contests, pops back to Britain to achieve much the same in the just-rebranded GB3 championship.

Bearman with Fortec Motorsport had already impressed at May's Brands Hatch season-opener in what was then BRDC British Formula 3, and the 16-year-old at Snetterton last weekend went even better.

In a rain-disrupted qualifying lap times had to be set early, and Bearman aced a pole time almost a second clear of the rest.

He completed the job in race one, heading home a Fortec 1-2 with Roberto Faria clinging to his coattails. Bearman's only concern otherwise was some British summertime spotting of rain.

"It was quite a tough race," he insisted to Motorsport News. "Mixed conditions to start off with and then the rain was coming down on and off in the middle, it made everything quite unpredictable."

Chief title protagonists Zak O'Sullivan and Reece Ushijima meanwhile collided, putting Hitech's Ushijima out while Carlin's O'Sullivan pitted to change a tyre. Ushijima held his hands up. "I was trying to dummy him, and I miscalculated," he told MN. "It was coming down with a bit of rain, I don't know if that's influenced it."

In race two Bearman looked set to repeat his race-one result, as from starting second he stormed past Hitech's poleman Sebastian Alvarez. The Mexican told MN: "I tried something different for the start procedure, and it didn't work. Probably not the best time to try it,". But on lap two Bearman slowed due to a radiator issue, that overheated his engine in turn putting it into limp-home mode. He soon pitted disconsolately.

Alvarez resumed the lead and kept it to the end, resisting O'Sullivan who had climbed from starting fifth. It was Alvarez's first win since the 2019 British Formula 4 runner-up sat out 2020 due to Covid's disruption.

"I ended F4 with a high," Alvarez continued, "and I was hoping to carry that on. Being [out of] the car a whole year made it quite difficult just to get those small details: each time I drive I get closer."

For the reversed-grid finale, only the top 11 got reversed due to some best times being outside 103% of pole in the unusual qualifying session, meaning Bearman and O'Sullivan started mid-pack.

And they quickly got into a frenzied multi-car fight for second place, but first place was all about Arden's Roman Bilinski – another impressing on loan from F4. He got past Fortec's poleman Mikkel Grundtvig on lap 2 at Wilson, and Grundtvig then provided Bilinski with cork-in-the-bottle services keeping the rest back. The Pole quickly had a 6s advantage that he kept to the end.

Bearman (87) showed strong Snet speed

RACE WINNERS

- **Race 1:** Oliver Bearman (Fortec Motorsports)
- **Race 2:** Sebastian Alvarez (Hitech GP)
- **Race 3:** Roman Bilinski (Arden Motorsport)

Bearman looked like he'd finish second, at last breaking Grundtvig's resistance at two-thirds' distance. But in a last twist rain arrived and Bearman on the penultimate lap had a Riches excursion and finished 14th. O'Sullivan therefore got second spot.

The victorious Bilinski told MN: "I had to maximise the start and then get as big a gap as possible, which is easier said than done. I saw [Grundtvig] was on new tyres so I knew I had the advantage in the first lap or two before his tyres got in."

O'Sullivan meanwhile, despite a far from straightforward Norfolk meeting, improved his championship position, aided by that his closest challengers Ushijima and Carlin stablemate Christian Mansell had difficult weekends. O'Sullivan's advantage is now 99 points.

"The last part of that weekend just sums up the whole weekend: so unpredictable," O'Sullivan told MN. "Pleased to come out of it relatively unscathed."

SUPPORT RACES

Josh Steed (Xentek Motorsport) shone in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge races, taking two wins from the triple-header. Steed, who moved ahead of Will Aspin (Elite Motorsport) on lap three, lost out in the opener to race-long leader John Bennett (Elite Motorsport) by 0.033 seconds, his late-race chance offered when Bennett was delayed in traffic.

Steed won race two after wriggling past championship rival Bennett mid-race, rain and contact with Aspin making life tougher, but he mastered a soaking wet track in race three to take win number two. His task was eased when Bennett spun out of second place on the last lap allowing Mikey Doble (Xentek Motorsport) to take second from Aspin, while Bennett recovered in eighth. Tom Holland, Marc Warren (both Raceway Motorsport) and Nick White (MRM Racing) shared the G40 wins.

Angus Whiteside (Want2Race) was the dominant force in the new Ginetta GT Academy races, his opening win coming from Toby Trice (SVG Motorsport), while team-mate Gilbert Yates was the nearest opposition in race two albeit 10s adrift. Yates, who had finished second on the road in the opener prior to being handed a 10s penalty for a false start, took over second spot in race two from Wes Pearce (Elite Motorsport) who had an off and then copped a 5s track-limits penalty. Whiteside dominated the third race, never headed as he won again from Yates and Trice, while historic racer Roy Alderslade (Assetto Motorsport) came home fourth.

Jason McInulty was a dominant winner of the shortened Elise Trophy race, curtailed when Jonathan Mee caused a red flag. Matthias Radestock was McInulty's nearest rival but a rematch was denied after race two was lost to Saturday's curfew.

Celebrating Snetterton's 70th Anniversary with a brace of 500cc F3 races may have seemed like a good idea but with lap times at nearly three minutes, laps were few for the spectators. Simon Dedman (Cooper Mk10) won a safety-car-interrupted opener from George Shackleton's Cooper MkX1, and Chris Wilson (Cooper Mk10) won the second stanza from third on the grid ahead of Darrell Woods (Staride Mk3) and Dedman.

David Addison

RACE WINNERS

- **Ginetta GT5 Challenge**
  Race 1: John Bennett (Elite Motorsport)
  Races 2&3: Josh Steed (Xentek Motorsport)
- **Ginetta GT Academy**
  Races 1, 2 & 3: Angus Whiteside (Want2Race)
- **Elise Trophy**
  Jason McInulty
- **500cc F3**
  Race 1: Simon Dedman (Cooper Mk10)
  Race 2: Chris Wilson (Cooper Mk10)

Bennett (27) and Steed (58) shared the GT5 Challenge wins

RESULTS

British GT Championship 2021

Race 1: Snetterton, GT3

POS.	DRIVER 1/DRIVER 2	TEAM/CAR	CATEGORY	TIME
1	Ahmad Al Harthy/Charlie Eastwood	Oman Racing with TF Sport/Aston Martin Vantage	Pro-Am	1h00m28.387s
2	Kelvin Fletcher/Martin Plowman	Paddock Motorsport/Bentley Continental	Pro-Am	+8.268
3	Leo Machitski/Dennis Lind	Barwell Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+8.623s
4	Andrew Howard/Jonny Adam	Beechdean AMR/Aston Martin Vantage	Pro-Am	+9.878s
5	Adam Balon/Sandy Mitchell	Barwell Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+10.313s
6	Stewart Proctor/Lewis Proctor	Balfe Motorsport/McLaren 720S	Silver-Am	+40.456s
7	Michael Igoe/Phil Keen	WPI Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+40.945s
8	Ian Loggie/Yelmer Buurman	RAM Racing/Mercedes-AMG	Pro-Am	+41.084s
9	Shamus Jennings/ Greg Caton	G-Cat Racing/Porsche 911	Am-Am	+1 Lap
DQ	Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton	Enduro Motorsport/McLaren 720S	Pro-Am	+32 Laps

Pole position: Al Harthy 1m49.237s. **Fastest lap:** Lind 1m48.557s (98.45mph). **Winner's average speed:** 94.26mph.

Race 2: Snetterton, GT3

POS.	DRIVER 1/DRIVER 2	TEAM/CAR	CATEGORY	TIME
1	Loggie/Buurman	RAM Racing/Mercedes-AMG	Pro-Am	1h00m14.598s
2	Balon/Mitchell	Barwell Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+4.615s
3	Igoe/Keen	WPI Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+8.011s
4	Al Harthy/Eastwood	Oman Racing with TF Sport/Aston Martin Vantage	Pro-Am	+23.786s
5	Machitski/Lind	Barwell Motorsport/Lamborghini Huracan	Pro-Am	+36.101s
6	Howard/Adam	Beechdean AMR/Aston Martin Vantage	Pro-Am	+36.605s
7	Proctor/Proctor	Balfe Motorsport/McLaren 720S	Silver-Am	+1m29.767s
8	Fletcher/Plowman	Paddock Motorsport/Bentley Continental	Pro-Am	+1 Lap
9	Jennings/Caton	G-Cat Racing/Porsche 911	Am-Am	+1 Lap
10	Tillbrook/Clutton	Enduro Motorsport/McLaren 720S	Pro-Am	+3 Laps

R Nick Jones/Scott Malvern (Team Parker Racing/Porsche) 3 Laps. **Pole position:** Lind 1m47.652s. **Fastest lap:** Igoe 2m01.592s (87.90mph). **Winner's average speed:** 79.83mph.

DRIVER STANDINGS

Barwell duo still lead table

BRITISH GT: GT3

POS.	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Leo Machitski/Dennis Lind	117
2=	Andrew Howard	110.5
2=	Ian Loggie/Yelmer Buurman	110.5
4	Adam Balon/Sandy Mitchell	97.5
5	Michael Igoe/Phil Keen	93.5
6	Jonny Adam	92.5
7	Stewart Proctor/Lewis Proctor	67.5
8	Richard Neary/Sam Neary	52.5
9	Kelvin Fletcher/Martin Plowman	50.5
10	Nick Jones/Scott Malvern	24

11 Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton 20; 12 Ross Gunn 18; 13 James Cottingham/Sam De Haan 15; 14 Shamus Jennings/Greg Caton 14; Lucky Khera/Ross Wylie 1.5

Race 1: Snetterton, GT4

POS.	DRIVER 1/DRIVER 2	TEAM/CAR	CATEGORY	TIME
1	James Kell/Jordan Collard	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	1h01m44.297s
2	Will Burns/Gus Burton	Century Motorsport/BMW M4	Silver Cup	+21.319s
3	John Ferguson/Scott McKenna	Toyota Gazoo Racing UK/GR Supra	Pro-Am	+21.838s
4	Katie Milner/Harry Hayek	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+22.610s
5	Mark Sansom/Charlie Robertson	Assetto Motorsport/Ginetta G56	Pro-Am	+23.065s
6	Will Moore/Matt Cowley	Academy Motorsport/Ford Mustang	Silver Cup	+40.373s
7	Jack Brown/Ashley Marshall	Balfe Motorsport/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+1 Lap
8	Nick Halstead/Jamie Stanley	Fox Motorsport/McLaren 570S	Pro-Am	+1 Lap
9	Dave Whitmore/Jake Giddings	Ciceley Motorsport/Mercedes-AMG	Pro-Am	+1 Lap
10	Alain Valente/Michael Benyahia	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+1 Lap

11 Matt Topham/Darren Turner (Newbridge Motorsport/Aston Martin Vantage) +1 Lap*; R Chris Salkeld/Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke (Century Motorsport/BMW M4) 15 Laps; R Richard Williams/Sennan Fielding (Steller Motorsport/Audi R8) 4 Laps. **Pole position:** Valente 1m57.504s. **Fastest lap:** McKenna 1m58.317s (90.33mph). **Winner's average speed:** 86.55mph. *40s post-race penalty for causing a collision

BRITISH GT: GT4

POS.	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Will Burns/Gus Burton	143.5
2	Chris Salkeld/A. Gordon-Colebrooke	99
3	James Kell/Jordan Collard	77.5
4	Matt Topham/Darren Turner	66.5
5	Will Moore/Matt Cowley	60
6	Jack Brown/Ashley Marshall	58.5
7	Richard Williams/Sennan Fielding	54
8	John Ferguson/Scott McKenna	43.5
9	Mark Sansom/Charlie Robertson	43
10	Nick Halstead/Jamie Stanley	42.5

11 Harry Hayek/Katie Milner 35; 12 Dave Whitmore/Jake Giddings 24.5; 13 3 Alain Valente/Michael Benyahia 22

Race 2: Snetterton, GT4

POS.	DRIVER 1/DRIVER 2	TEAM/CAR	CATEGORY	TIME
1	Moore/Cowley	Academy Motorsport/Ford Mustang	Silver Cup	1h02m19.651s
2	Salkeld/Gordon-Colebrooke	Century Motorsport/BMW M4	Silver Cup	+2.749s
3	Valente/Benyahia	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+3.803s
4	Kell/Collard	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+1 Lap
5	Burns/Burton	Century Motorsport/BMW M4	Silver Cup	+1 Lap
6	Milner/Hayek	Team Rocket RJN/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+1 Lap
7	Brown/Marshall	Balfe Motorsport/McLaren 570S	Silver Cup	+1 Lap
8	Halstead/Stanley	Fox Motorsport/McLaren 570S	Pro-Am	+1 Lap*
9	Topham/Turner	Newbridge Motorsport/Aston Martin Vantage	Pro-Am	+2 Laps
R	Sansom/Robertson	Assetto Motorsport/Ginetta G56	Pro-Am	0 Laps

*40s post-race penalty for an unsafe pitstop
R Ferguson/McKenna (Toyota Gazoo Racing UK/GR Supra) 0 Laps; R Whitmore/Giddings (Car Gods with Ciceley Motorsport/Mercedes-AMG) 0 Laps
Pole position: Robertson 1m56.937s. **Fastest lap:** Burns 2:11.981 (80.98mph). **Winner's average speed:** 74.30mph.

Mustang took overdue win

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

GEOFF LEES – FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE

He nearly took Nigel Mansell's F1 seat, and nearly won Le Mans, but there's more to Geoff Lees than being a nearly man, as Graham Keilloh finds out

Big talent; low cash: so Lees headed east

From a certain angle, Geoff Lees' climb through the racing ranks looks typical. He took several Formula Ford titles plus the European Formula 2 crown, and dabbled in Formula 3 along the way. Then like so many, even 40 years ago, he found Formula 1 bosses not willing to take on his talent without some cash coming along with it.

So far, so familiar. But plenty about Lees' story is unorthodox. It was a career very nearly stopped at source due to an eye injury. He juggled bagging race wins with a day job as a motor mechanic. His journey took him to Can-Am (and featured detours via a helicopter and a mountain house) and eventually to an eclectic range of machinery and plenty of success in Japanese racing, beating a path that many from Europe would follow.

Moreover he nearly got Nigel Mansell's F1 drive and later came within an hour of winning Le Mans. In both cases however fate took hand. Yet for the reasons outlined and more, to consider the unassuming and softly spoken Midlander a nearly man sells him well short.

But let's start this extraordinary tale at the point that success started to flow.

Question: How important to your career was winning the Formula Ford triple crown (three national championships) in 1975? And was that the first time you flew in a helicopter (two race meetings in one day)?
Willie Cunningham
Via email
Geoff Lees: "Yes well I have to say it [the triple crown] was very important. It was a really good thing for me because I got involved with Chevron through me winning those Formula Ford races and so it moved me up to Formula 3. And also for my brain to be truthful it gave me confidence, the confidence to move up."
MN: Did you not have much confidence in your ability before that?
GL: "Oh no, I don't know where my ability came from. I'm very lucky that I took to motor racing very quickly. Of course I started with not much money so my cars weren't so good and I did my own engines for Formula Ford, but once you start winning and the confidence grows then it's easier to move on."
MN: So in terms of moving to Formula 3 was it just a case that Chevron knew you and offered you a chassis?
GL: "What it was, I went to Silverstone and I had a test with five other drivers and my test was at the end of the day on worn-out tyres but I finished quickest of all of them and I was asked there and then to be

Photos: Motorsport Images, Toyota Gazoo Racing

Lees' Lotus F1 drive nearly led to so much more...

part of the Chevron team that year."

MN: And *was* it the first time you flew in a helicopter when you had two meetings in one day?

GL: "Yes it was the first time, how fantastic was that? I couldn't believe it when I saw the helicopter and the private pilot, I felt like a superstar, it was so good. [It was] from Mallory Park to Thruxton and back and again, so yeah it was fantastic flying in the helicopter."

MN: Did it affect your driving at all, was it tiring?

GL: "No, no. I put both cars on pole position and won the race at Thruxton and came back and won the heat at Mallory Park. And then I actually had a breakdown, the battery shorted out in the final when I was leading. So, no it didn't affect my driving but I can tell you after racing on two different circuits with two different cars on one day that night time I was worn out, I remember sleeping very well."

Question: As a former Formula Ford Festival winner and with the event celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, what memories do you have of competing in the Festival in its early days?
Scott Woodwiss
Via Facebook

GL: "I only ever did the Festival once and I did win of course [in 1975, the last one to be held at Snetterton]. That year there was a lot of cars and they stopped the racing many times that day because of different accidents. And I don't know if you know but I had an eye accident when I was 17, and I always used a dark visor on my helmet and that day in the last race it was getting dark and by God was I struggling in that race because having to wear a dark visor when it was getting dark, I was really struggling to see where I was going."

MN: You still somehow managed to prevail despite that?

GL: "Well I did because I actually followed the guy that was in second place, I let him take the lead and I followed him and then right at the end I overtook him and won because I basically couldn't see so much.
I followed him for a few laps and then in the end I got past and pulled away so I was OK. I've always enjoyed Snetterton, it's a good circuit."

MN: I also understand that you were running the car out of the coach and sleeping it in during the Formula Ford days?

GL: "Yes that's correct. I used to travel in that coach everywhere. I used to go down to Royale, when I built the car at Royale I slept in it and I also remember doing a race weekend where I went to Oulton Park and I won the races that weekend and then after the race I prepared my car, I drove down to Brands Hatch, up early in the morning for scrutineering and I raced it at Brands and I finished again on top because I did win a lot of races in Formula Ford.

"And I remember after the race again being so tired that I decided to sleep for a couple of hours and then I woke up early morning and I drove back home and washed and changed and was back to the garage that morning because I was still a motor mechanic. And I remember being back at work for 0900hrs and I'd had a hard weekend and my boss came to me and he said to me 'hi Geoff, good morning, how did you get on over the weekend?' And I said 'well I have had some wins again at Oulton Park and Brands Hatch' and I said 'I'm worn out though', he said to me 'well have a sleep underneath one of the cars for a little bit, you'll be OK'. I had a very good understanding boss."

Question: What was it like to have driven for seven F1 teams across four seasons?
Alexander Cameron
Via email

GL: "Well this is a long question if I answer you properly. My first race was with Tyrrell [in the 1979 German Grand

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Lees impressed on his F1 debut at Hockenheim in 1979 with Tyrrell

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FEATURE

In Le Mans '98 Lees finished his last stint with car in lead

Prix at Hockenheim] and I was lucky to get that chance to drive. As you may remember [Jean-Pierre] Jarier had hepatitis and my manager rang me to tell me that I was going to Germany to race for Tyrrell and I didn't believe him, I actually put the phone down because I thought he was joking and he rang me straight back to say 'no you're racing that weekend'.

"Ken Tyrrell said to me before the race he was extremely happy with me where I'd qualified, in 16th place, but please be careful with the car because if anything happened to the car and he'd got to come back to England it was going to be possible that it could miss the [subsequent] Austrian Grand Prix.

"And going down to the first corner I remember banging wheels with [Riccardo] Patrese, I couldn't back out of it, so I finished up managing to get past Patrese and I never saw him again and I finished seventh. And I had a fantastic dice with [Carlos] Reutemann in the Lotus for a few laps until he crashed and if it had been another one lap I'd have had a point, I'd have finished sixth and I'd have been really happy with that.

"But I was happy to finish seventh because that was my first grand prix and after the grand prix Ken, first of all he said he was really happy with my performance, would I do Austria? And of course I jumped at the chance. And then I couldn't race at Austria because they put Derek Daly in the car because of money. Guy Edwards was his manager and he got money from Guinness and he got money from ICI. So I'm afraid I lost out.

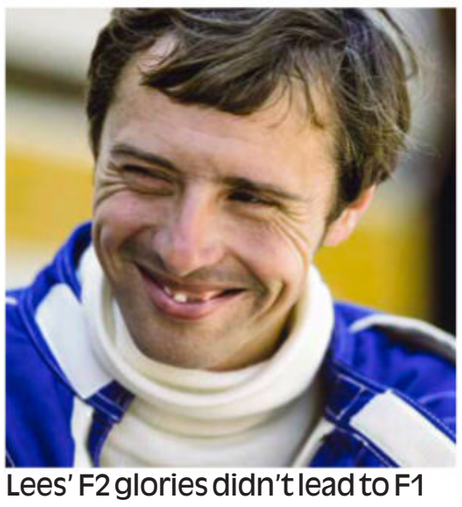
"But to have had the chance to have raced for Tyrrell and I know that if I'd got that race in Austria, I was seventh in Germany, I'm sure I could have been fourth or fifth probably at the Osterreichring. So I was looking forward to going to the Osterreichring and to lose the drive to Daly who I didn't rate very highly at the time and it was just money. So I went back to work as a motor mechanic the next morning, that was it."

MN: And after that, in 1980 it was Shadow and Ensign, in quite patchy one-off drives?

GL: "Yes, well I did the best I could with what I was given. I have to say [at] Shadow, I think I was only one that ever qualified that car and the team had no money and it was the only car I ever drove that really frightened me. The steering rack used to run across the top of the chassis and when you went into a fast corner and loaded the front of the chassis the steering would seize up, you'd turn the wheel to go into the corner and you couldn't get the lock off.

"I lost my F1 drive and went back to work as a motor mechanic"

Geoff Lees


Lees' F2 glories didn't lead to F1

"It was a terrible car, it was the worst car I drove in. And I drove some bad cars especially with Toyota in sportscars but the Shadow took the biscuit, that was the worst."

MN sets the scene: Lees drove in F1 for Lotus in the 1982 French Grand Prix at Paul Ricard, replacing Nigel Mansell who had an injured wrist. Lees finished 12th, despite an early delay with a puncture, and set a fastest lap six tenths faster than that of team-mate Elio de Angelis.

Question: How close were you to a Lotus drive for 1983?
Derek Holmes
Via email

GL: "The Lotus drive, that was the best thing that happened to me. I went to the French Grand Prix to drive the Lotus, that was the Mansell car, and as soon as I jumped in the car I only did half a lap and the engine let go. And when they towed the car back Colin Chapman said to me I'm so sorry we really should have changed the engine because Nigel had tried to drive the car with damage on his hand and he'd missed some gears and overrevved the engine, they thought it was OK but obviously it wasn't.

"But that meant we couldn't get an engine in the car for the afternoon. I went out in the car the next morning and [had] a misfire, the car would go up to about 10,000 revs and then it would start misfiring. They changed all the electrical parts on it and at the end of the day we still had a misfire but back then you had to qualify, as you know back then there was about 30 cars that would turn up for 26 places. And I drove my socks off to try and qualify the car; after I qualified 24th Colin was really happy because he said to me with that misfire I never thought you'd qualify.

"And we had a meeting, I went in the motorhome to talk to Colin, and he said to me 'what do you think's wrong?' I said 'you've changed all the electrical parts and I actually think it feels like it's running out of fuel'. And he jumped up, ran over to the garage, they stripped the bag tanks down and they found that the foam that's in the bag tanks had got stuck in the fuel pump and it was partly blocked, so when you got to high revs it wasn't sucking enough fuel.

"And they fixed that and then the next morning I went out in the car, no misfire, it was the warm up for the race and I was quickest. And I couldn't believe I was the quickest car out there the next morning but obviously I was and I started the race and moved up, moved up from the back and I got up to 13th place and had a puncture, I had to come in.

"I lost nearly a lap and we changed two tyres on the right side of the car, not like it is now, the car goes up and you change four tyres in a matter of a few seconds, back then it was quick-lift jack and you changed two tyres on the right side of the car and left the ones on the left side and off I went.

"Well I did the best I could in that race, I drove as hard as I could and after the race Colin said to me could I come to the motorhome, I want to have a meeting with you. He asked me would I be the test driver for the rest of the year and you can join us the following year and drive for Lotus? And I signed a contract that day and then of course it was only a few months after that Colin died, he had a massive heart attack and died and I lost the drive.

"So this is the biggest disappointment for me in my career, to lose that drive when I'd signed the contract to take over from Mansell the following year and I was really very very happy. So this is the reason I went to Japan. I went to Japan to do the Formula 2 championship and I was already the Formula 2 champion in Europe [in 1981] so I couldn't do Formula 2 again [as the champion was not allowed to return]; I'd got no money to get a good drive in Formula 1 so this was the reason I went to Japan.

"But I'm happy I did because I won the Formula 2 championship there and I got to drive many different cars; it was a very good move for me because I earned [decent] money."

MN: So after Colin Chapman's untimely death did you just not hear any more from Lotus?

GL: "No I did, I spoke to Lotus and [they] said they couldn't honour the contract, they needed money and I never managed to find money for my motor racing nearly through all my career. I was not very good at finding money I'm afraid."

Question: What was the reaction like in Japan and at home to becoming the first non-Japanese to win the Super Formula title? Did other foreign drivers come asking for tips on how to succeed in Japan?
Ida Wood
Via Twitter

GL: "It wasn't called that [then], it was called the All-Japan Formula 2 championship. Yes to have won that championship [in 1983] of course it was so good for me. First of all financially it was good for me because winning the Formula 2 championship it meant that I got offered drives with touring cars, sportscars and what they called Grand Champion cars which many people probably don't know what that is, that's a Formula 3000 car with bodywork, looks like a Can-Am car. And funnily enough they're actually very quick because they're extremely low and quite long and on a straight with the wheels being covered they got up to a good speed, and they were a good car to drive."

MN: And did other foreign drivers come asking for tips on how to succeed in Japan?

GL: "[Laughs] Yes but I was as you know the first foreigner that actually moved there and I lived there because after one year I met a Japanese girl and we settled down and I was married.

"And when I first went to Japan I went there thinking that if I won the Formula 2 championship I knew that Honda was coming back into Formula 1 and I was hoping if I won the Formula 2

Ogawa (centre-left, in front of Lees) was rated highly

championship I could get a drive with Honda and move back to England and do Formula 1 again. But I'm afraid that didn't happen, after I won the Formula 2 championship I had a meeting with Mr [Nobuhiko] Kawamoto, he was the lead man from Honda, he ran the company at that time, the racing division.

"And Kawamoto said to me that he was very sorry that they couldn't use me in Formula 1 because Mr Honda wanted a Japanese driver and Mr Honda wanted [Satoru] Nakajima. So it was extremely disappointing for me again that I wasn't chosen although I was the quickest out of the two of us, I'd beaten Nakajima in the Formula 2 championship but they chose him because Honda wanted a Japanese driver. That was it, I couldn't come back to do Formula 1."

MN: When you had your success in Japanese F2 was there much of a reaction from Europe and the UK?

GL: "No, not really. In fact I was very disappointed that I'd gone out there and proved myself again in Formula 2, I've won the [European] championship with the car in '81 which was inferior, the Ralt was never as good as the March, and I can explain the reasons why but it would be a long conversation [*for insight on this pick up Motorsport News's 1981 Motorsport Moments bookazine out now*]. But then going to Japan I'd never raced on any of those circuits so to go there and win the championship I think was a pretty good thing to prove myself that I was quick in a Formula 2 car but it didn't help me get a Formula 1 drive I'm afraid.

"Again I rang around all the Formula 1 teams but everybody was 'we'd love to have you but have you got any money?' And back then I'm afraid that was the problem, I couldn't get sponsorship for Formula 1."

MN sets the scene: Lees' long-time team-mate and driving partner Hitoshi Ogawa was killed in an All-Japan Formula 3000 race held at Suzuka in May 1992, shortly after Lees and Ogawa won the season-opening World Sportscar Championship race at Monza for Toyota.

Question: Does Geoff Lees have particular memories of Hitoshi Ogawa, one of his team-mates at Toyota who died in a tragic accident in an F3000 race in Suzuka? They were doing the WSC together and won the first round.

Guilherme Andre M Ribeiro
Via Twitter

GL: "Yes I do. He became a good friend. Ogawa-san was a very nice guy. When he came to England he came with his wife and I helped him get an apartment in London, and he'd got no car so I went to the Toyota agent in Sutton Coldfield and I talked them into loaning a car to him and I gave it to Ogawa to drive about in. So we became very very good friends.

"If I could tell you the story of the start of that year with Ogawa we won the first race at Monza, after Monza we went to Silverstone. I did the first two stints in the car and I got Ogawa in and at the time I was over a lap ahead of the Peugeot because I think Derek Warwick had come in to the pits and hadn't fastened his seat belt properly and had to come in again so it meant I got a lap ahead of the Peugeot. All Ogawa had got to do was drive round and finish the race and I think it was about half a lap and the engine stopped, we had a problem with the electric pickup on the flywheel.

"But after the race we both sat in the motorhome having a little food and talking and I said to Ogawa 'well I'm looking forward to this week, it's about time me and my wife had a holiday and we're going to go to the Virgin Islands'. And he said to me 'well I'm going to go back to Japan', and I said 'what on earth do you want to go that back there for?' And he said 'I've been offered to do Formula 3000', the race the next weekend, obviously they'd paid him to do it, and I actually turned round and said to him 'look we're in the World Sportscar Championship now you don't

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Lees won the European Formula 2 championship in 1981, despite in the Ralt not having the best car

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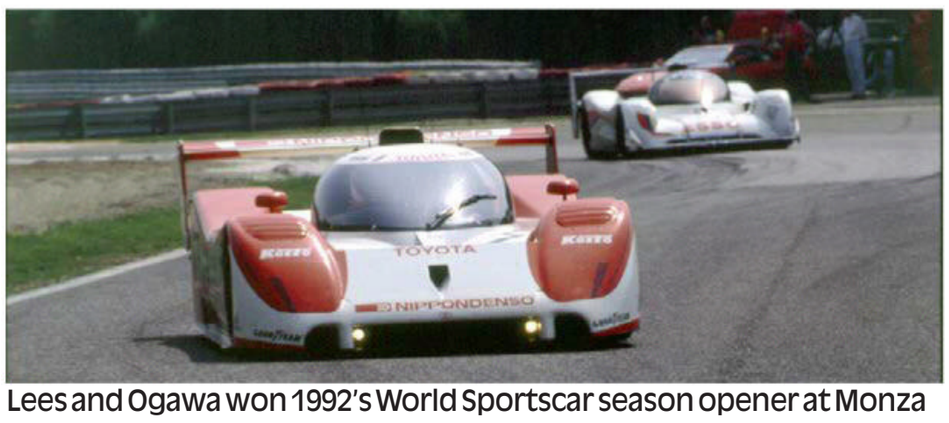
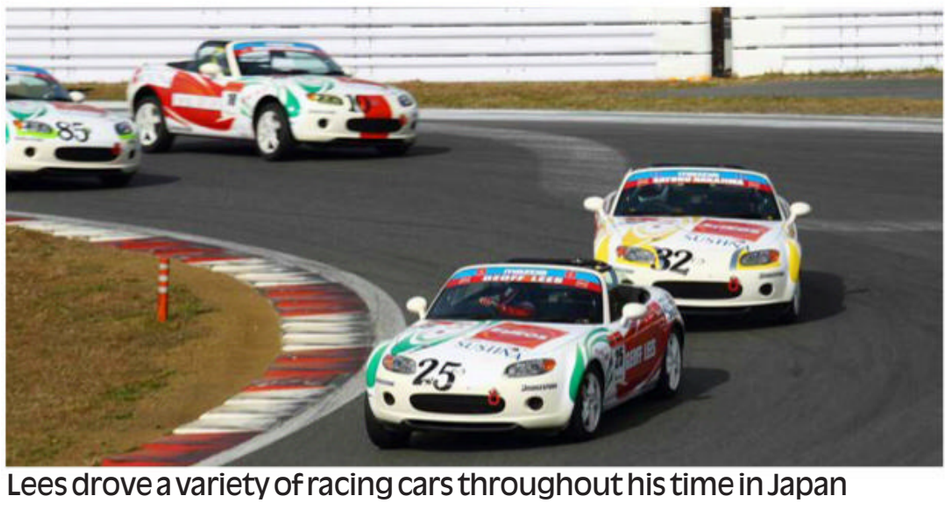
FEATURE

The F1 Shadow in 1980 was the only car to frighten Lees



Lees and Ogawa won 1992's World Sportscar season opener at Monza



Lees drove a variety of racing cars throughout his time in Japan

"I feel I won Le Mans; my job was done"

Geoff Lees

Money and drives were in Japan

need to go back to Japan' and he said 'well they're paying quite good money so I'm going to go back'.

"And of course he was killed that following weekend. I was on holiday in the Virgin Islands, I'd been there three or four days and I had a phone call that Ogawa had been killed and we packed up straight away, got a flight as quick as possible and I went off to Japan to the funeral, and it was extremely sad. His wife was pregnant and he never saw his little girl.

"And it was horrible. He was not only my team-mate, he was a good friend and I was helping him, in every way I could I helped him. It's a very sad part of motorsport losing a friend. When I actually went to Suzuka to race, the night before I walked down to the first corner and I just said a prayer for him and that was it. If I told you the story all the way through it's pretty sad and one of the bad parts of motor racing to lose a friend and team-mate. It's not nice."

MN: In terms of his driving talent, how did you rate him?

GL: "If he was out on the circuit on his own he'd do good lap times. But the problem was he wasn't very aggressive, he'd follow a car and found it difficult to overtake. And, to be quite truthful, I was trying to get him to be a bit more aggressive with his driving and I always felt a little guilty after he had his accident, I don't know whether it was me trying to make him become more aggressive so I have to say I hurt quite a bit after I lost him because he was a good driver and as I say put him in a car and send him out to a qualifying lap, or a quick lap, he could do some good times, he was good.

"I liked Ogawa-san, I liked him as a team-mate and I liked him as my second driver. He could go quick and he was safe, and I've said a strange thing there, I always felt he was safe in the car then he goes and has a bloody accident in a Formula 3000 car. I never expected that."

Question: What advice did you give Tiff Needell about taking corners flat out at Suzuka?!
Richard Jenkins
Via Twitter

GL: "Somebody knows that story obviously [indeed, Jenkins is helping write Geoff Lees' autobiography out next year]. We were at Suzuka and I was in my Ralt Honda and I was just over a second quicker than Tiff in qualifying and we were talking after the qualifying and Tiff said to me '130R, do you take that flat?' I said 'yes'. He said 'you mean you go down one gear and then you put your foot down and it's flat?' 'No,' I said 'you don't go down a gear, it's flat in fifth'. 'Oh my God,' he said, 'I'm going down one gear then flooring the accelerator'. I said 'no Tiff, it's flat'.

"He didn't believe me so I said 'if you don't believe me go and watch, you can stand on the exit, on the outside of the corner and you'll hear that I don't lift at all, I don't go down a gear, it's completely flat'. So I came up the straight and I saw Tiff on the on the right side watching me and of course as I said I didn't lift, so after practice he said 'well I shall have to try to be flat through that corner'. So I think it was his second lap he tried to go flat and he went up the kerb and lost it, and he damaged his car quite a lot. And when I came up the straight I saw the yellow flags and I knew there'd been an accident and the first thing came to mind was 'I reckon it's Tiff'.

"And when I came round the corner Tiff was getting out the car and he dropped back in the car and he stuck his fingers up at me to give me a dirty signal, [saying] 'you bastard'. And then after they towed his car back in and he came back into the garage he said to me 'it might be flat in your car but it weren't in that car!' So yes it was it was funny at the time, very funny."

Question: How tough was life in Japan in between the races?
Ken Sexton
Via email

MN: Was it tough?

GL: "Well actually yes, the first year. When I arrived there, my boss was Tetsu Ikuzawa, and Tetsu was renowned for being very tight with money and I had to stay in a mountain home actually for the first two months and it was bloody freezing because I lived close to Fuji mountain, [and] Fuji circuit, and in the winter time or the springtime it was very very cold up there and suffers from heavy snow.

"And I hated Japan then. The first few months of being in Japan and me being on my own, living in a mountain house in the bloody icy conditions I wanted to pack up and come back to England, but I knew if I was going to earn any money I needed to stick it out.

"It was very hard not being able to speak the language, I needed a translator all the time when I was racing, if I wanted to go anywhere like on a train there wasn't many English signs back then so I needed someone with me to teach me and then I used to go off on my own when somebody taught me where to go but it was difficult because you'd lose your way, [they] couldn't speak English, I couldn't speak Japanese and it was very hard. And I didn't have a lot of money either, I couldn't just jump in a taxi and come home because I needed to use the trains because it was cheap."

MN: I take it over time things got easier?

GL: "Yes once I started to win a few races I had some pocket money. And I

So nearly the winning trio: Lees, Boutsen and Kelleners

also managed to find a home, a house in Tokyo but the first house I stayed at I only had one room and they had children and the doors on the Japanese houses are paper and I could hear the kids all the time and it was noisy and it was difficult to sleep, and cold, but finally I managed then after another month or so to get an apartment and I lived there on my own.

"It was expensive for me at the time but I couldn't stay with other people, I managed to be winning enough money to pay for an apartment and then when Tiff and other drivers came to Japan I let them stay with me for a little bit because it helped with the rent.

"But of course then I met somebody and that made life a lot better, when I had a partner things became much better, she became my wife. When I first met her it was nice that I had somebody to stay with me, show me around Japan and take me to all the nice restaurants. So it became great to be in Japan, winning the championship, having a partner, having money for the first time in my life, because as you know until I went to Japan all I was was a motor mechanic and Japan became the thing for me because I finally earned money and I had good drives when I was there."

MN sets the scene: Lees started no fewer than 14 Le Mans 24-hour races and in 1998 his Toyota GT-One, driven alongside Thierry Boutsen and Ralf Kelleners, led with an hour to go.

Question: Tell us about the heartbreak at Le Mans in 1998.

Howard Bush

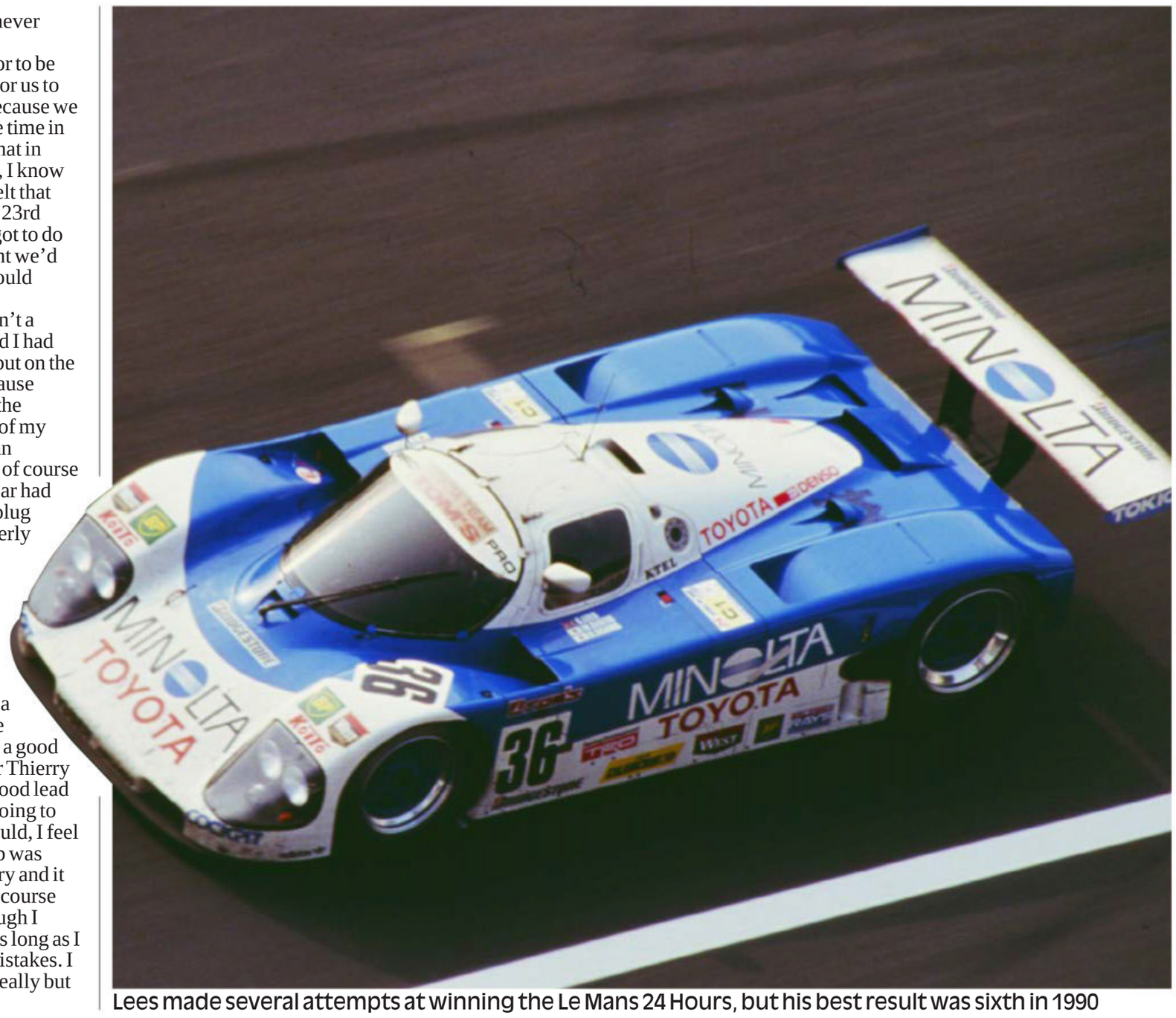
Via email

GL: "I always said I'd never retire from doing Le Mans until I'd won it and over my career I actually led Le Mans five times and then things went wrong. And that time, 1998, after testing that car down at Ricard we thought we'd probably last six hours, we'd never finish the race.

"So for us to finish the race, or to be capable of finishing the race, for us to run 23 hours was incredible because we just kept breaking down all the time in testing at Ricard. But I know that in my heart, at Le Mans that race, I know I never made a mistake and I felt that when I got out the car after the 23rd hour all Thierry Boutsen had got to do was just drive around, I thought we'd win. I never thought the car would break down.

"And I went into, well it wasn't a motorhome, my little room and I had a shower because I wanted to put on the best of my three race suits because I thought I was going to be on the rostrum, and when I came out of my little room all these big German mechanics were all crying. So of course I ask what's going on and the car had stopped because the oil drain plug hadn't been tightened up properly and it vibrated out and we lost the oil and that's all it was that stopped us from winning Le Mans.

"But I'd been in the car quite a lot at night and probably in the night was the hardest time because it was wet and dry for a bit and it was very slippy in the middle of the night but we had a good lead. When I got out the car for Thierry to take over we had a bloody good lead and I really thought we were going to win. So I feel I did the best I could, I feel I won Le Mans because my job was done, I handed it over to Thierry and it stopped, not Thierry's fault of course but I feel I won Le Mans although I don't get credit for it. I drove as long as I could and I didn't make any mistakes. I was happy with the weekend really but we suddenly broke down." ■



Lees made several attempts at winning the Le Mans 24 Hours, but his best result was sixth in 1990

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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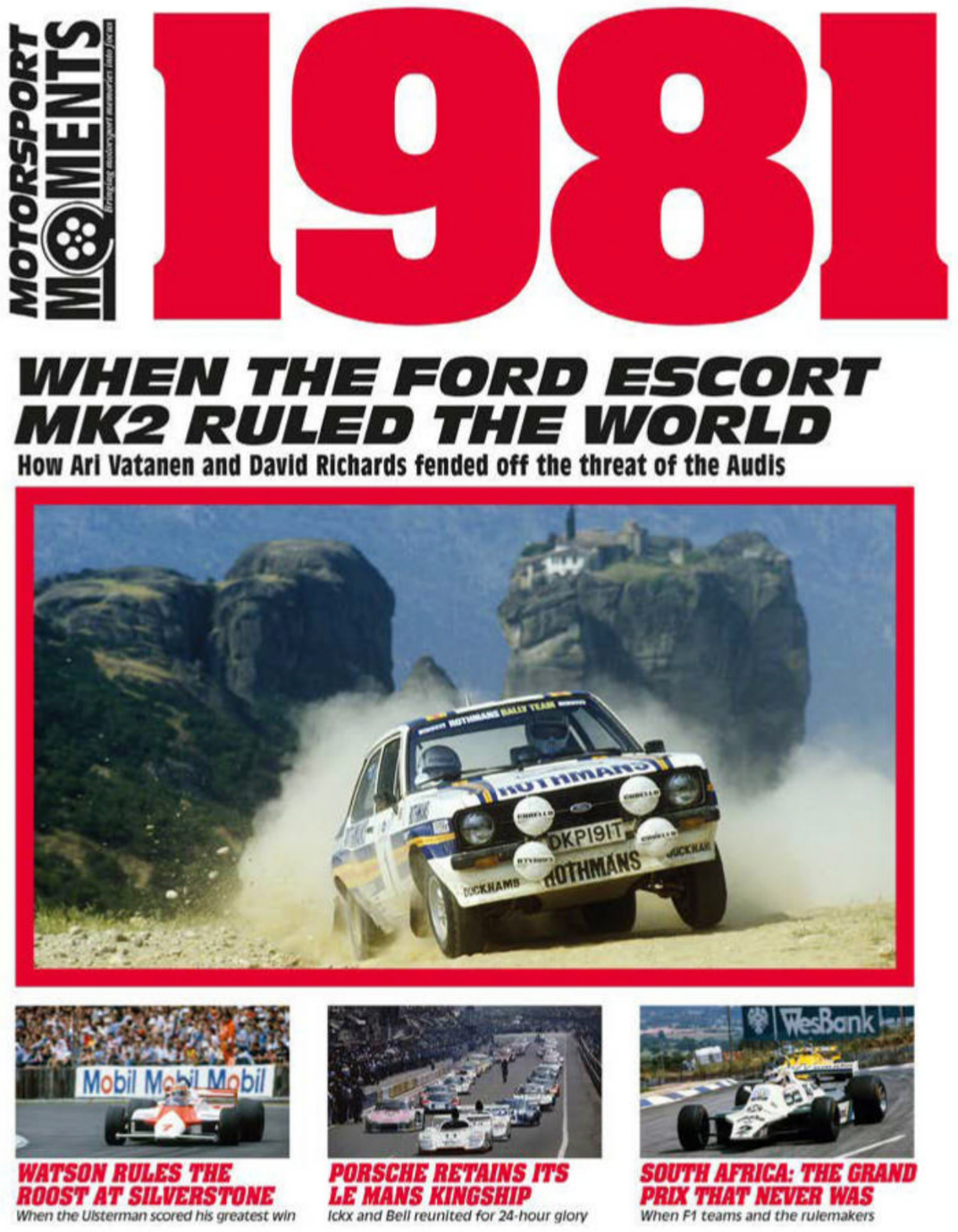
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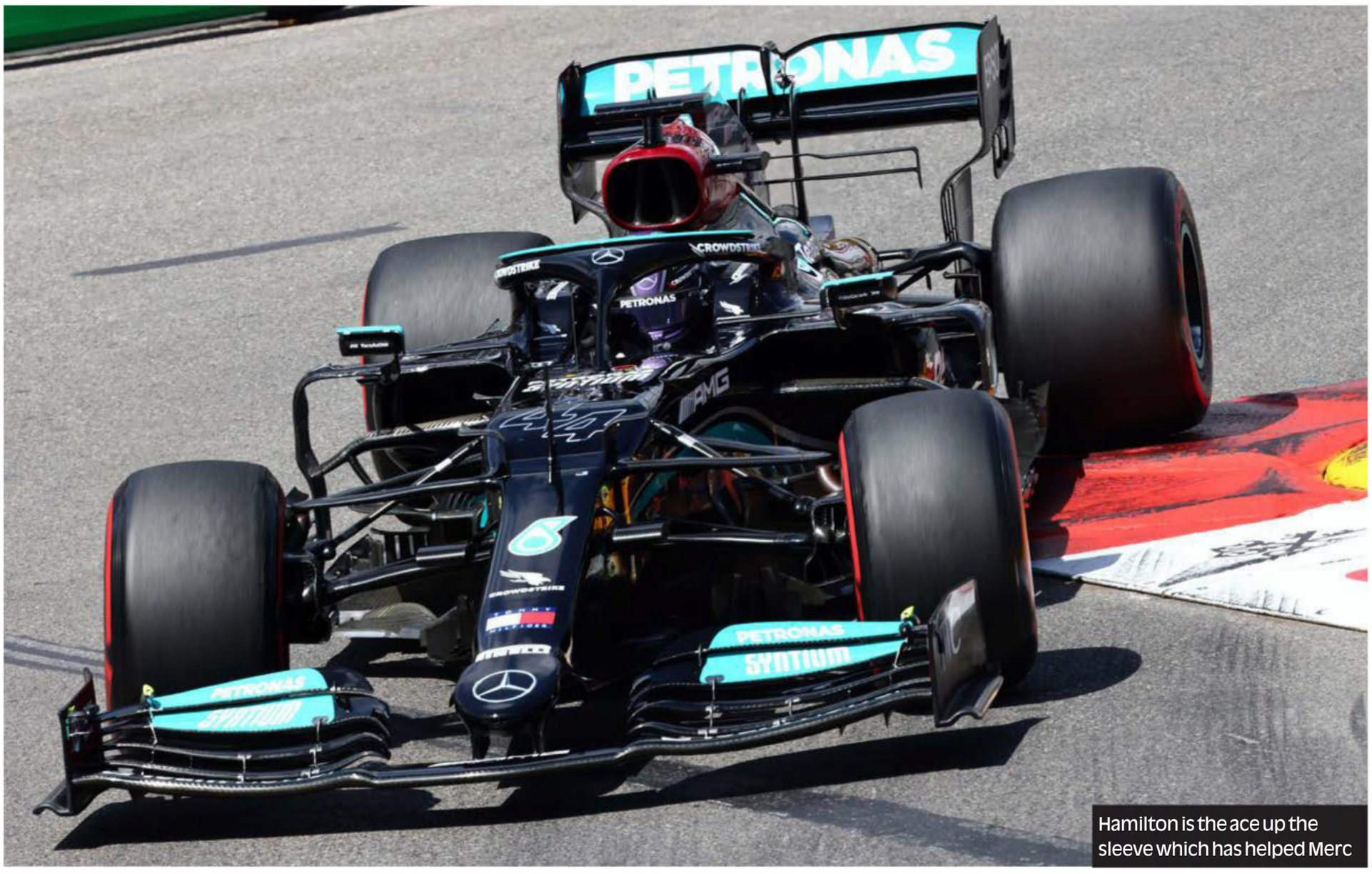
FEATURE

WHO HAS STOLEN A MARCH AT THE HALFWAY STAGE?

Nearly midpoint in the 2021 Formula 1 campaign, it is an intriguing season. By James Roberts

Eleven races down, 12 to go. Formula 1 takes its annual summer holidays which gives us the opportunity to consider which drivers are top of the class and which of those are wearing a dunce's hat. As term time comes to an end, we grade all 20 drivers and reflect on their efforts and failures for the first half of the season.

Up front it's a close fight between the two title protagonists: Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen. Behind them there are other notable battles that are worth highlighting. We also identify which drivers need to improve for the second half of the season, that gets underway with the Belgian Grand Prix at the end of August. In points order as the summer shutdown commences, here's MN's half-term school report for the grid…



Hamilton is the ace up the sleeve which has helped Merc

Bottas: under fire...

1 MERCEDES 303 POINTS

At the start of the summer break, Mercedes has just pipped Red Bull to reclaim the championship top spot for both the team and its star pupil Lewis Hamilton. In the biggest threat to its dominance in the hybrid era, Mercedes has been resilient to the pressure so far – thanks mainly to its British talisman.

The most significant moment of the year was the flashpoint at Silverstone, whereby Hamilton came back to win a dramatic British Grand Prix in front of his many fans, while his arch rival Max Verstappen was lying in a hospital bed. The intensity of that home race was in part due to the huge crowd in attendance – the highest number for over a year – and the fact Mercedes hadn't won for five races in a row.

The on-track duel between Hamilton and Verstappen was always going to come to blows at some point. At the first corner at both Imola and Barcelona, Max used all of the road to ensure Lewis couldn't find a way past. At Copse on lap one of the British GP, Hamilton wasn't going to yield a third time. What will happen next as this title fight unfolds? It's almost inevitable the pair will be in close contact again and as the intensity ramps up, Hamilton will draw on his experience of close championship run-ins, while this is a new pressure for Verstappen.

And what of Hamilton's wingman Valtteri Bottas? Frankly it's been a disappointing campaign for the quiet Finn. Poor starts have hampered his races, none more so than Hungary's disastrous first corner shemozzle which hindered the Red Bulls but could have taken out his own team-mate. Step forward George Russell.

GRADES

Lewis Hamilton A+
Amazing desire to keep winning, even when faced with adversity

Valtteri Bottas C-
Detention and a visit to the headmaster's office after his Hungary mishap

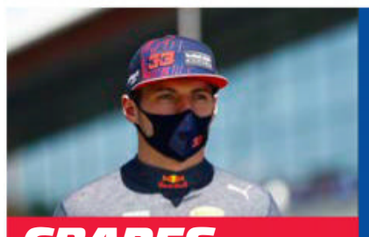
Red Bull has eclipsed Mercedes on occasion. How will it fare in the run-in?

2 RED BULL 291 POINTS

Consider for a moment the points advantage Verstappen might have if he'd not had his tyre blow out just a few laps from victory in Baku? Or if he'd not collided with Hamilton at Silverstone and avoided the first-corner mayhem in Hungary? And of concern now is the impact on his Honda power unit following the huge Copse corner shunt. During the summer break it is being inspected in Japan, as any reliability issues can lead to future in-season engine changes that will have a knock-on impact to Red Bull's championship ambitions as grid penalties will be served…

For the neutral fans, having a different team and driver fighting for the championship has injected a new vigour into the sport. It has a similar feel to a young Fernando Alonso challenging Michael Schumacher's dominance back in 2005. And it's incredible to think that Verstappen is only 23 years old but has 130 grand prix starts to his name. That's more than either Mario Andretti or Damon Hill managed in their Formula 1 careers.

Sergio Perez has fared well in the notoriously difficult second Red Bull seat and doubled his F1 win tally with victory in Baku. But his British Grand Prix weekend was miserable, spinning in the Sprint race that led to a last-place start in the main event. Must do better.



GRADES

Max Verstappen A+
Brilliant drives to take the fight to Hamilton

Sergio Perez C-
A little more application would be appreciated next term

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

Ferrari's pace: a mystery wrapped in an enigma

3 FERRARI 163 POINTS

It's probably easier to unlock the mystery of the Da Vinci Code than to explain Ferrari's form in the first half of this year. Charles Leclerc upset the established order when he put his scarlet car on pole position in both Monaco and Baku. But unfortunately for Leclerc, his home race was ruined after he'd damaged his car in the final stages of qualifying, doing a worse job of parking his car in Monaco than Michael Schumacher once did...

Perhaps the Ferrari suited slow corners that demanded good mechanical grip and traction? If so, how does that explain why he was three laps away from dominating the British Grand Prix on Silverstone's high-speed sweeps? Likewise at Paul Ricard, both Ferraris qualified in the top 10 and sunk out of the points on race day.

Perhaps the author of the Da Vinci Code was right and the answer for their performances comes not from Maranello, but from the Vatican. Both Leclerc and the dependable Carlos Sainz will be praying for more consistency over the second half of the year and – in particular – divine intervention for their home race at the Italian Grand Prix at Monza.

GRADES

Carlos Sainz C+
Best subject: languages, particularly Latin

Charles Leclerc B+
Not to be confused with General Charles Leclerc, Napoleon's brother-in-law

4 McLAREN 163 POINTS

It's a story of two contrasting halves at McLaren. In one side of the garage, young Lando Norris has excelled. He sits third in the drivers' championship at the halfway stage of the season, ahead of both the 'number two' drivers at Mercedes and Red Bull.

Before he was eliminated at the first corner in Hungary, Norris was the only driver to score points in every race this season and, even more remarkably, he also held the record for the McLaren driver with the most consecutive points finishes – an incredible 15 races in a row. That's an amazing statistic when you consider the roster of champions such as Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna, Mika Hakkinen and Lewis Hamilton who have driven for the team. Podium finishes in Imola, Monaco and Austria are Norris's highlights and his next breakthrough moment – a race win – should come sooner rather than later.

In contrast it's been utter despair for Daniel Ricciardo. He is without doubt one of the best racers on the grid, but something in the set-up and driving style of the car isn't clicking. And when confidence is low, it spirals further downward. Hopefully, Ricciardo can reset during the summer shutdown and come out fighting when the fight resumes at Spa in the last weekend of August.

GRADES

Lando Norris A*
Star pupil who is collecting virtually all of the house points

Daniel Ricciardo D+
Daniel knows the subject well, but must try harder next term

Norris has been a record-breaker for McLaren

Alonso has lost none of his guile in a Formula 1 car

Ocon took a shock win

5 ALPINE 77 POINTS

Take a sporty French brand. Add to an established British racing team. Mix in a pinch of experience and youth, et voilà, you have a race-winning dish. Esteban Ocon's surprise victory in the Hungarian Grand Prix was a lovely tonic to end the first half of the 2021 season.

While he was faultless out front, it was the heroics of his team-mate Fernando Alonso, who gallantly held up Lewis Hamilton for 10 laps, which helped cement the first-ever victory for the Alpine team. This is an *equipe* with drivers working in harmony, not at logger-heads, and was Ocon's first single-seater victory since 2013. Unbelievably, that was also the last year in which Alonso won a grand prix. Hopefully the combative Spaniard can end his win drought soon.

GRADES

Esteban Ocon A-
Excels in cookery, forming a perfect recipe with Alonso and Alpine

Fernando Alonso A-
History buff who reads about himself in the old textbooks

Photos: Motorsport Images

6 ALPHATAURI 68 POINTS

By his own estimation, Pierre Gasly has made the best start to any season he's driven in F1. Last year's Italian Grand Prix winner is a regular Q3 qualifier, challenging the McLarens and Ferraris, and his ambition is to get fifth overall for the team – a position the Faenza-based squad have never reached before.

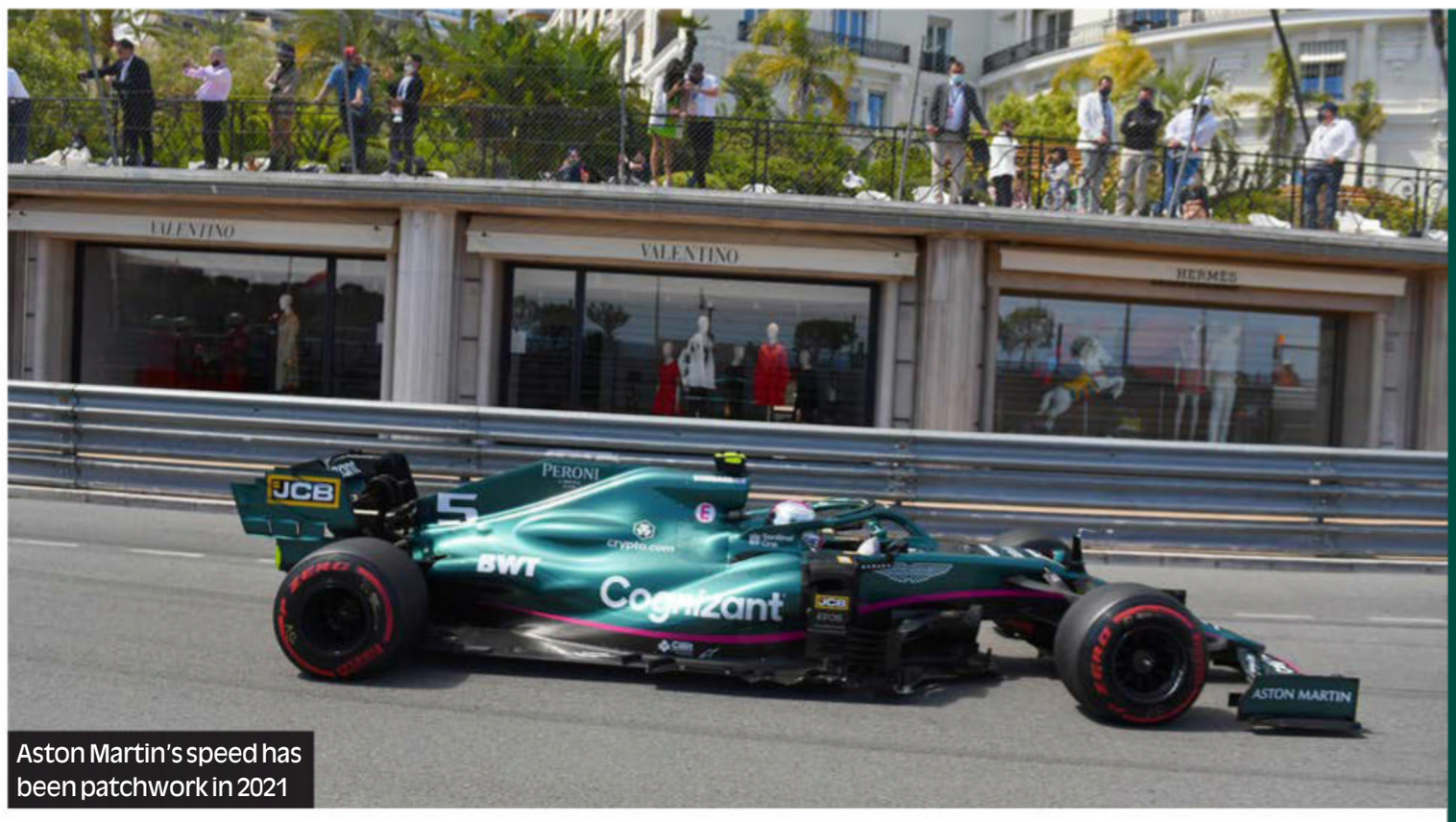
On the other side of the garage, rookie Yuki Tsunoda is discovering the step-up to F1 rather more traumatic. The Japanese racer described his F1 experience so far as a "roller coaster." Adding: "One lap is good. The other is in the wall."

GRADES

Pierre Gasly A-
Scoring highly in art, where he is finding his own style

Yuki Tsunoda D+
Extra maths lessons required to help tot up all those repair bills

Gasly has shone for AlphaTauri this season



Aston Martin's speed has been patchwork in 2021

7 ASTON MARTIN 48 POINTS

There has been a glimmer of the Sebastian Vettel of old this year. Second place in both Baku and last time out in Hungary (despite the trouble with officials post-race) proves he still has the speed. But at Silverstone, a rather lame spin coming out of Luffield was more indicative of the recent performances we've seen from Seb.

Life at Aston Martin has launched him into a courageous bid to save the world: defending human rights with rainbow motifs and picking up litter in the Silverstone grandstands. Here's hoping that he'll solve the disputed territories in the south China seas next month.

In contrast his team-mate Lance Stroll has been doing what Lance Stroll does very well: driving around a bit.

GRADES

Sebastian Vettel B+
Full marks for his extra-circular activities

Lance Stroll C-
Blamed the dog for eating his homework

Williams could be on the verge of losing Russell

8 WILLIAMS 10 POINTS

As the Williams train pulls into Didcot Parkway station, you can clearly hear "all change please." The departure of the Williams family last year initiated a new roster of management now headed up by ex-rally guru Jost Capito and his long-time technical chum FX Demaison.

Behind the wheel George Russell has done a sterling job in occasionally hauling his Williams into Q3 and – in Hungary – finally getting his first points for the team. It should be a question of 'when' rather than 'if' the call up to Mercedes will be.

GRADES

George Russell A+
Exams passed with flying colours

Nicholas Latifi C+
Plays his own tune, separate from the rest of the orchestra

9 ALFA ROMEO 3 POINTS

Raikkonen still has verve – well, on track at least...

David Coulthard once described this outfit as "the best Formula 1 team in Switzerland." He summed it up perfectly, as there is little more to add. There seems a bit of a mismatch between the road car manufacturer - who is actually a sponsor – and the Sauber entity underneath. At the Hungarian Grand Prix, the Italian car maker was proudly displaying Swiss flags in its motorhome to celebrate Swiss National Day. While Kimi Raikkonen has a great natural talent and a faithful following; he could inject just a little more enthusiasm into his racing...

GRADES

Kimi Raikkonen C-
Not sure he pays attention to what's being said in class

Antonio Giovinazzi C-
Should consider life as an archaeologist: a career in ruins...

10TH HAAS 0 POINTS

Even before the season began, Haas' frank-speaking team boss Gunther Steiner said there were no plans to upgrade this year's car. So both Mick Schumacher and Nikita Mazepin have had to make do with what they've got. It hasn't been easy, but both rookies just need mileage to understand the complexities of the sport.

At the halfway stage, Schumacher Jr has done the better job, but Mazepin has started to iron out the endless spinning that dogged his early races. Sadly, neither will attain any great achievements this year.

GRADES

Mick Schumacher C-
Has found a decent teacher in Seb Vettel

Nikita Mazepin D-
Nicknamed 'Maze-*spin*' by his classmates

Haas has made do with what it has this year

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

The BTCC's biggest roller coaster: Knockhill's layout

THE SECRETS TO TAMING THE CHALLENGE OF KNOCKHILL IN A TOURING CAR

Matt James looks at the unique appeal of the next stop on the BTCC schedule, Knockhill

Tim Harvey sampled the joys of Knockhill in the Super Touring days

Within the British Touring Car Championship paddock, the trip to Knockhill in Fife is often called, with a tongue firmly in the cheek, the series' overseas round. It isn't, of course, but it certainly provides something different within the 10-event schedule.

The BTCC first went north of the border in 1992 and it has been back for most years since. The compact nature of the track – which sits on a hillside in Scotland and stretches to just 1.27 miles – means that it always delivers action on the Tarmac and it creates a unique challenge for the drivers.

The track layout has remained unchanged since those initial two races in 1992, which were won by Jeff Allam (Vauxhall) and Tim Harvey (BMW).

Three-time British Touring Car Championship title winner Gordon Shedden has returned to the series this year with Team Dynamics in a Honda Civic. Knockhill is home turf for him as he works at the venue as its commercial director. He knows the appeal of balancing a tin-top on the edge around the undulations and demands of the track.

Shedden explains: "Knockhill is exciting because there isn't a second where you can relax around the whole track. Even the straights aren't straight. It would be a very different challenge if it were billiard-table smooth, but it certainly is not. That is part of the appeal – the unpredictability.

"On every corner, you need huge commitment but not too much. You have to be as close to the edge as you dare but without going over it, and that is a fine balance to try and strike. You don't get that with any other track and you have it at every single corner at Knockhill."

When the drivers see Knockhill coming up on the schedule, it can send a tingle down the spine because of those challenges that Shedden describes.

But the rough-and-tumble nature of the layout can lead to some overly close racing. Tim Harvey tamed the track during the Super Touring days in the 1990s and now calls the race action on ITV4's coverage of the category. He says Knockhill always delivers something different.

"It was a round that I always enjoyed going to as a driver purely because it is completely different to any other circuit," explains the 1992 BTCC title winner. "You always get a fantastic greeting there because a lot of the crowd don't get to go to other races and they make you feel very welcome. The track itself is really challenging, but set against that, there are an awful lot of incidents and unforeseen things that can happen up there, be that weather or accidents. There is an awful lot that can go wrong there, so you have to have big respect for it."

As well as the respect from a driving point of view, there are specifics of car set-up which challenge the engineers more in Scotland than at any other track on the calendar.

Harvey explains it is always a compromise. "There aren't really any fast corners at Knockhill. Clark is probably the fastest corner, and the exit from the chicane, so you don't need to set the car up with too much rear grip, which you might do at somewhere like Thruxton," he says. "You want the car on its nose and get as much front grip as possible which will help with direction change and traction, so long as you can just hang on to it through Clark and the chicane. But along with that, you need to make it a bit softer so you can ride the kerbs, and maybe you would push up the rideheight a little bit too. It is very specific in its set up."

Four-time title winner Colin Turkington describes the Fife circuit as among his top two favourites on the roster. The Northern Irishman has tasted success there but has also notched some remarkable comeback drives after trouble earlier in the meeting. He knows the perfect blend for a quick machine at Knockhill.

Turkington says: "You have to make the car a bit more forgiving purely because you have to attack the circuit so much. The car really needs to be good over the kerbs. You have to have a car that is more compliant. You don't run it as stiff as you would at other circuits because you need a machine that can absorb the kerbs: and that is not just the chicane, that is at Clark and at Duffus Dip too. It is a compromise. Duffus Dip is a fast corner and you need high-speed stability to attack that, but the car needs to be good on traction out of the final hairpin so it is about

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey

Gabriele Tarquini was one of those who found the limit in Scotland

Colin Turkington heads for the gravel in 2014

Shedden thinks the challenge is unique

finding the sweet spot with the car."

So the set-up is crucial, and it has demands that are unique to the venue. Shedden says he likes his car to be on its toes, darting all over the track, as he attempts to land the fast laps.

"To get the perfect lap, you really need the car to be on its tip-toes," says the Scotsman. "That just means when you are in mid-air, which you are quite a bit, it takes a lot of hanging on to. The second you try to back the car off and calm it down, the lap time just goes away from you. You want the car to be a bit edgy, a bit snappy, because then it will deal with the direction change better. You want it like a meerkat – you want it up and eager, ready to dart about and chase the ultimate lap."

Any image of a car on a fast lap at Knockhill is a delight for photographers – be they professionals or those on the spectator banks – with cars two-wheeling through Duffus Dip, the chicane and Clark. It is a temptation that seems so strong in Scotland, and it is not just about pleasing the snappers.

Turkington says: "Any time you can cut the corner it is going to be the fastest way. It is about smoothing out the turns as much as you can and travelling the shortest distance. The kerbs at Knockhill are actually some of the widest we race on, so there is a big temptation to use them."

Shedden agrees but says that there are occasions where using too much of the kerbs can actually be counter-productive. "It is actually all about using the kerbs in the right way," he explains. "A lot of people use them in the wrong way. You want to crash over them when you need to, but not just for the sake of it or because you think it looks good or is the right thing to do. But, it is a flow that comes with the track which is amazing, I don't think there is another circuit where you need to get into a rhythm as much.

"Because it is short, you have to build up the pace. There is so much that can go wrong at any point on the lap and that can be through no fault of the driver's. You could bounce the wrong way or it fails to grip up on landing when you would expect it to. That is what makes it harder than anywhere else."

There are two tags that Knockhill has rather unfairly earned: that it is hard to overtake and that the layout favours rear-wheel drive. The action around the 1.27-miles is never dull and, if you look at the list of the last 10 race winners, five have been front-motivated and five have been rear-wheel drive.

Let's deal with the drivetrain first.

Shedden will aim for home glory

Turkington explains: "I don't know if there even are any rear-wheel-drive tracks any longer anywhere on the calendar. In years gone by, we could say that: there used to be good rear-wheel-drive territory in the middle of the season. But, if you look at the results in recent seasons, that doesn't appear to be the case anymore.

"That is for many reasons: both Croft and Knockhill have been resurfaced in recent times and that has taken some of our strengths away at those circuits. People always talk about good rear-wheel-drive traction but at Oulton Park 10 days ago, I had no traction advantage there coming out of the hairpin. Things are quite level now. In this day and age, I think the success ballast weight has a bigger bearing on the results that the drivetrain of the cars."

And as for the BTCC's calling card, the door handle-to-door handle action, Shedden thinks that the circuit actually plays to the series' strengths.

> **"You have to build such a rhythm to be quick"**
>
> **Gordon Shedden**

He explains: "You can pass, but you have to think about it. People always say that the circuit is tight, but you would say that the racing at Knockhill is as good as anywhere. It is a million times better than Oulton Park for example. Don't get me wrong, Oulton is a fantastic circuit to drive on, but it doesn't give the great racing and that is just because of the nature of the way the corners are there."

And Turkington too thinks that the layout can help promote close competition – but he also regards that as a by-product of the current BTCC rules and drivers.

"I have heard it is said that is it hard to pass at Knockhill, but when you watch the BTCC in the modern era, I think every corner is an opportunity, whether that is on the inside line or outside line," he explains. "That is the case on every track and I can't ever remember a processional race at Knockhill, even though it is narrow and tight and twisty. There is always a lot of bunching there and that seems to create opportunities for great racing."

The circuit is generally a hit, and it is the level of commitment on display from the drivers that helps: it is so much more obvious on that hillside that it is at virtually any other track on the calendar, with the exception of Thruxton.

Harvey thinks watching the drivers at work in Scotland is a pleasure. He says: "It is hard to say one track is better than another, but I love the challenge it presents to drivers to get a smooth clean lap. It is all about controlled aggression. You can overdrive it, but you still need a measure of control. It is certainly thrilling to watch and it is up there among my favourites."

For Shedden, picking out Knockhill as a great track isn't much of a leap of faith. "Sure, I am going to be biased but it is my favourite on the calendar. I generally like all the old-school tracks with a bit of elevation change. I do like Oulton Park, I like Brands Hatch GP track and I like Donington," he says. "Those are my kinds of circuit and Knockhill fits right into the heart of all of that. People say it is like a mini-Nurburgring but it is just all happening when you drive around there, and I think that is what touring car racing is all about."

"There are a few things which mean it is a special place for me," explains Turkington too. "I enjoy driving the circuit, and I enjoy being in Scotland – I studied in Stirling, just up the road from Knockhill.

"You are right in the middle of the fans. The way the paddock is laid out means you are immersed in the Scottish spectators and they can get extremely close. It is almost a bit old school because you work out of an awning and you aren't in garages. It is a really nice vibe and one I always look forward to."

At the end of the three races this weekend, there will be drivers celebrating on the rostrum and those who have been through the Knockhill mill. But, more than anything, they will all have faced down one of the BTCC's toughest tests. ■

A DECADE OF KNOCKHILL WINNERS

2011
Race one: Tom Chilton (Ford Focus)
Race two: Gordon Shedden (Honda Civic)
Race three: Tom Boardman (Seat Leon)

2012
Race one: Rob Collard (BMW 320si)
Race two: Rob Collard (BMW 320si)
Race three: Dave Newsham (Vauxhall Vectra)

2013
Race one: Colin Turkington (BMW 125i M Sport)
Race two: Colin Turkington (BMW 125i M Sport)
Race three: Andrew Jordan (Honda Civic)

2014
Race one: Matt Neal (Honda Civic Tourer)
Race two: Mat Jackson (Ford Focus)
Race three: Rob Collard (BMW 125i M Sport)

2015
Race one: Rob Collard (BMW 125i M Sport)
Race two: Gordon Shedden (Honda Civic)
Race three: Matt Neal (Honda Civic)

2016
Race one: Jason Plato (Subaru Levorg)
Race two: Matt Neal (Honda Civic)
Race three: Mat Jackson (Ford Focus)

2017
Race one: Jason Plato (Subaru Levorg)
Race two: Ash Sutton (Subaru Levorg)
Race three: Tom Ingram (Toyota Avensis)

2018
Race one: Ash Sutton (Subaru Levorg)
Race two: Andrew Jordan (BMW 125i M Sport)
Race three: Tom Chilton (Ford Focus)

2019
Race one: Rory Butcher (Honda Civic)
Race two: Andrew Jordan (BMW 330i M Sport)
Race three: Jake Hill (Audi S3)

2020
Race one: Ash Sutton (Infiniti Q50)
Race two: Ash Sutton (Infiniti Q50)
Race three: Rory Butcher (Ford Focus)

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RACING REPORTS

Photos: Gary Hawkins

BRANDS HATCH: BRSCC: BY MARK PAULSON — AUGUST 7-8

Gordon Sawyer hit back with a win in race three

Alex Walker was twice on top in the National Formula Ford encounters

SAWYER GETS HIS ATTACK BACK ON TRACK

Gordon Sawyer bounced back from disqualification to win the third Caterham Seven UK race at Brands Hatch and reignite his title challenge.

Having twice exchanged the race-two lead with Saturday winner Will Smith, Sawyer nosed inside Smith again at Clearways without spotting that yellow flags were still out for Gordon Macdonald's stricken machine. That also prised an opening for Stephen Nuttall to pass Smith into Paddock Hill Bend and Nuttall later rounded Sawyer, who would be thrown out of the result, at the same corner to take his fourth win of the season.

A fired-up Sawyer then charged from the back of the grid, drafting past Henry Heaton – who himself had risen from fifth – to lead, before fending off Heaton's fightback. "I was just so determined," said Sawyer. "The slightest little door opened, I was gone."

A day earlier, Sawyer had dropped from first to third after being passed by both Smith and Heaton at Paddock Hill Bend. A pair of fourths allied to his win mean Nuttall remains atop the standings.

Trademark wet-weather prowess earned Formula Ford Festival winner Rory Smith a National championship race win and clinched the Triple Crown mini-series in his part-campaign. Smith in his B-M Racing-run Medina pounced on Saturday winner Alex Walker (Kevin Mills Racing Spectrum) as rain intensified in the second race. Walker had taken a fine win in the opener after breaching the stern defence of Max Esterson (Low Dempsey Racing Ray), then commanded race three from third on the reversed grid after passing front-row sitting team-mate Tom Mills, who held off the rest of the pack for the duration.

When Hugo Bush ran wide at Clearways after passing Taylor O'Flanagan for the lead in Caterham Roadsports, the five-car lead scrap exploded into life. Tom Cockerill was briefly ahead, but O'Flanagan passed at Graham Hill Bend and went on to win from Adam West and Bush. O'Flanagan again edged a tight rematch, with Cockerill beating Bush to second. Carl Jones outdragged Steven Lyall to claim the first 270R race by a whisker, before Blair McConachie returned to form in the sequel. Jones was promoted to second when Wes Payne and Lyall's clash ended the race early.

Two wins for Rod Birley in Super Saloons were made harder by safety cars. Alex Sidwell's Holden Commodore VF made late charges to second and then third behind Ronan Bradley's BMW E36 as his pace increased with the drying track in showery weather. Chris Bassett (Peugeot 306 GTi) threatened a giant-killing performance when, from second on the grid, he briefly led, but still came away with a pair of Tin Top successes. To those he added double Track Attack glory, twice beating home David Clark's Renault 5 GT Turbo.

Debuting his Vauxhall-powered ex-Richard Wise Chiron, Bikesports champion Charles Hall won the Zeo Prototype Cup opener after coming from behind in a good scrap with Mikey Jenvey, whose Ford Duratec-motivated Jenvey-Gunn was starting to overheat. Cooling issues solved, Jenvey took the follow-up, with Graham Charman's Juno twice third.

RACE WINNERS

Caterham Seven UK
Race 1: Will Smith; **Race 2:** Stephen Nuttall; **Race 3:** Gordon Sawyer

National Formula Ford
Races 1 & 3: Alex Walker (Spectrum 011C); **Race 2:** Rory Smith (Medina JL18)

Caterham Roadsport
Races 1 & 2: Taylor O'Flanagan

Caterham 270R
Race 1: Carl Jones; **Race 2:** Blair McConachie

CMMC Super Saloons/ Southern Tin Tops
Races 1 & 2: Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

Track Attack Race Club
Races 1 & 2: Chris Bassett (Peugeot 306 GTi)

Zeo Prototype Cup
Race 1: Charles Hall (Chiron CN2); **Race 2:** Mike Jenvey (Jenvey-Gunn TS6)

Caterham 310R
Races 1 & 2: Lewis Thompson

Caterham Academy
Green: Freddie Chiddicks
White: Harry George

Rod Birley was a double winner in the tin-top races

Track Attack Race Club honours went to Chris Basset on both occasions

CROFT: BARC BY MATT SALISBURY — AUGUST 7-8

WHEATLEY TAKES COMAND AS WIGGIN AND TAYLOR TAKE WINS

Dominic Wheatley is the new leader in the Mini Challenge standings, despite still waiting to secure his first victory of the season.

Wheatley secured finishes of fourth and second in the two races at his home circuit of Croft, but came away from the meeting on top of the points after previous leader Matt Hammond had to settle for a best finish of 12th, just two weeks on from the accident at Oulton Park after which he was airlifted to hospital.

Joe Wiggin took race one honours after a time penalty for contact with Lewis Saunders prevented Louis Capozzoli from securing his maiden victory in the series. There was however a first-time winner in race two after Nicky Taylor mastered tricky conditions to beat Wheatley to the line.

The CNC Heads Sports and Saloons field faced wet conditions for their two Saturday races, with the Spire of Jon Woolfit taking a dominant race one victory ahead of Paul Dobson's Locost 7 as others fell by the wayside. They included Paul Rose, but he recovered in the second race to head a Saker 1-2 ahead of Steve Harris.

A busy weekend for the Legends saw the usual frenetic battles on track, with Jack Parker and Miles Rudman winning the opening two heats before Rudman took the first final from 23rd on the grid. Jon Mickel and Parker won the remaining two heats, with Sunday's final going the way of Gibson as he overhauled Rudman and Mickel on the final lap, having started on the penultimate row of the grid.

In the Caterham Graduates, Sigma 135 honours went to James McCall and David Read, with the combined Sigmax/Sigma 150 races being taken by Harry Senior and Ben Winrow.

John and Matthew Davies took victory in the three-hour C1 Racing Series race that concluded the weekend after problems for winners elect Alistair May and Chris Parkes just minutes from the end. The grid had earlier come together for a lap of honour to honour Angela Lucas, after her death in an accident at Snetterton last month.

RACE WINNERS

Caterham Graduates 135
Race 1: James McCall; **Race 2:** David Read

Caterham Graduates Sigmnax/150
Race 1: Henry Senior
Race 2: Ben Winrow

Sports/Saloon Car Championship
Race 1: Jon Wolfitt (Spire GTR) **Race 2:** Paul Rose (Saker)

Legends Cars
Race 1 & 5: Jack Parker
Race 2 &3: Miles Rudman
Race 4: John Mickel
Race 6: Will Gibson

Mini Challenge
Race 1: Joe Wiggin
Race 2: Nicky Taylor

C1 Race Series
John Davies/Matthew Davies

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Steve Jones

SILVERSTONE: 750MC BY MARCUS PYE — AUGUST 7-8

LOCK AND HICKLIN WIN ENDURO ON A GRAY DAY

Joe Lock and Ash Hicklin were in it for the long haul with Club Enduro victory

Scott Mittell won the second encounter for the Bikesports field at Silverstone

Early season unreliability woes faded when Joe Lock and Ash Hicklin triumphed in Sunday's 100-minute Club Enduro feature in Tim Gray Motorsport's BMW E46 M3, ending Carl Swift and Rob Baker's four race unbeaten run in their Seat Leon Supercup.

With two big stops per lap and 46 rivals to negotiate, the championship leaders' front brake pads wilted during pacesetter Lock's stint. Area Motorsport's efficient crew changed them within the three-minute stop – under a safety car – only for a wheel nut to stick, costing them seconds.

Team boss Baker salvaged third, behind Andy Marston's E46 M3, winner of Saturday's shorter Roadsports pitstop race. Mazda MX-5 pairing Alex Miller/John Langridge bagged another division win and could deny Swift/Baker the title at Oulton Park next month.

Double Bikesports champion Joe Stables and birthday boy Scott Mittell each won a round on Saturday from the other. Stables' Radical had the vital edge in the Vale/Club complex to counter Mittell's eponymous car's speed on the Hangar Straight.

Tweaks for race two, after a sharp shower, improved the Mittell's traction but Stables – and half the field which delayed its slick tyre call, matching Mittell's – were late on parade and started from pitlane. Stables finished 25 seconds down.

A win and a second saw Lee Morgan go top of the F1000 points table as erstwhile leader Elliott Mitchell had a nightmare, retiring from race two. Cool as the penguin on his Mittell-run Jedi's nose, Dan Gore ambushed Morgan at Stowe coming out of a Code 60 speed restriction to win it.

Philip Wright won the first Hot Hatch race. Points leader Alistair Camp passed Wright to restore the status quo in race two and now has seven wins from nine starts. Chris Smith was best of the rest. Top Type-R Trophy qualifier Craig Shepherd had to repass Lee Deegan for two more wins, and seven-one ratio.

Kingsbury rules applied to Sunday's Clio races in which Jason Pelosi made Jack sweat and Jack Dwane's title hopes faded. Aaron Cooke and Shaun Traynor's MR2 title fight continued with a win each. Nick Williamson exceeded for passing them under yellows second time out.

Niall Bradley aced the BMW races, seeing off Rick Kerry's V8-engined 1 series V8 in the latter, having caught a lurid slide out of Club – when he hit second gear, instead of fourth – on reflexes and adrenaline. Brad Sheehan and Michael Cutt carved through to third and fourth from the back.

Danny Hands and Craig Pollard swapped the Formula Vee opener's lead repeatedly, Hands prevailing. Reigning champion James Harridge was fourth from the back, unable to catch Ian Buxton after he was stuck behind a safety car. Race two was abandoned as the 1800 curfew loomed.

From sixth on the grid James Plant burst his caricature Healey-Chevrolet through a mighty miscellany to win the Bernie's V8s race. Adam Southgate bested the concurrent Porsche Trophy posse while British Touring Car Championship ace Josh Cook thundered Pete Hallford's Boss Mustang back to sixth post-stop.

RACE WINNERS

Club Enduro
Joe Lock/Ash Hicklin (BMW E46 M3)

Roadsports
Andy Marston (BMW E45 M3)

Bikesports
Race 1: Joe Stables (Radical PR6);
Race 2: Scott Mittell (Mittell MC-41R)

F1000
Race 1: Lee Morgan (Jedi Mk6/7);
Race 2: Dan Gore (Jedi Mk6/7)

Formula Vee
Danny Hands (AHS Dominator Mk2)

Tegiwa Type-R Trophy
Races 1 & 2: Craig Shepherd

Hot Hatch
Race 1: Phillip Wright (Honda Civic);
Race 2: Alistair Camp (Honda Civic)

Clio 182
Races 1&2: Jack Kingsbury

Toyota MR2
Race 1: Aaron Cooke (Roadster);
Race 2: Shaun Traynor (Roadster)

BMW CC
Races 1 & 2: Niall Bradley (E46 M3)

Bernie's V8s and Porsche Trophy
James Plant (Austin-Healey V8)

SILVERSTONE: BDC BY PAUL LAWRENCE — AUGUST 7

BENTLEY CELEBRATES 73RD ANNIVERSARY AT SILVERSTONE EVENT

A true bastion of club level racing, the Bentley Drivers Club's annual race meeting at Silverstone lived up to expectations as it marked the club's 73rd Silverstone event in a proud history that dates back to 1949.

Star of the day in Bentley terms was Ben Eastick in the spectacular T Type special, first developed by his father Barry back in the middle 1970s. On Saturday, Ben completed on a promise he made to his father more than 40 years ago.

In 1977, Barry was contesting the Times Trophy when an accident sidelined the car and ended its first competition career. When the car was later sold, Ben promised his dad that one day he would buy it back and prove it to be a winner. After four years of rebuild and challenges, Ben won the 50th running of the Times Trophy on Saturday.

A handicap start left him joining the race from the pitlane, but that mattered little to Eastick, who tore through the field of mainly Pre-War Bentleys to win convincingly in the rocket ship his father conceived 45 years ago.

As ever, for the Bentley meeting, Morgans played a starring role and it was no surprise when Olly Bryant bagged two classy victories in the Plus 8 that his father first bought as a road car in 1977. Bill Lancashire put up a decent fight but could not contain the GT racer, who added two more wins to the car's impressive record.

Another double winner was Ollie Neaves, who won both races for the MGCC BVC8 championship in some style. Russell McCarthy starred in the second race, coming from the back of the grid to claim a podium place after retiring from race one.

The Ecurie Classic Racing 40-minute contest was a cracker. Even though Allan Ross-Jones ran away and hid at the front, in his wake there was some great action as the Austin Healey 100/4 of Oliver and Nicholas Harris battled ahead of the Alfa Romeo Giulia of Tom Andrew.

FISCAR also had a mini-enduro, but this one was far clearer as the Allard J2 of Tim and Oliver Llewellyn was a commanding winner. The Classic Challenge fell to the rapid Jack Bellinger (Morgan) who quickly recovered from a first lap spin at Becketts to retake the lead and win from the Morgan of Craig Hamilton-Smith. Gwyn Pollard was the class of a rather thinned out Allcomers race in his Crossle 9S.

Photo: Mick Walker

Ben Eastick was one of the stars in his

RACE WINNERS

Morgan Challenge
Races 1 & 2: Olly Bryant (Plus 8)

MGBVC8
Races 1 & 2: Ollie Neaves (BGT V8)

Times Trophy for Bentleys and Pre-War Cars
Ben Eastick (Bentley T Type)

FISCAR
Tim Llewellyn/Oliver Llewellyn (Allard J2)

Classic Challenge
Jack Bellinger (Morgan Plus 4)

Bentley Handicap
William Elbourn (3/4.5)

Ecurie Classic Racing
Allan Ross-Jones (Triumph TR4)

Allcomers Race
Gwyn Pollard (Crossle 9S)

KNOCKHILL: SMRC BY STEPHEN BRUNSDON — AUGUST 8

MACLENNAN PUTS A HALT TO GRONKOWSKI'S WINNING FORMULA FORD 1600 RUN

Jordan Gronkowski extended his Scottish Formula Ford 1600 points lead at Knockhill last weekend, despite seeing his unbeaten run halted by the returning Neil Maclennan in race two.

Gronkowski did keep his 100% pole record intact, though, after topping the 12-minute qualifying session that was delayed due to a major oil spill by a Fiesta ST Cup competitor, and duly led National FF1600 champion Maclennan at the start of race one amid torrential rain.

Maclennan stuck with Gronkowksi throughout but couldn't get close enough to make an overtake, with the latter taking his fifth victory of the season by just over a second at the flag.

It was a similar story in race two, except it was Maclennan who seized the advantage on lap one. Gronkowski closed the gap to 1.3s at the finish, but Maclennan resisted to take his first non-guest driver win since 2016.

Despite missing out on a potential race one win, Michael Weddell increased his points lead over Chad Little with a pair of podiums in the Mini Cooper Cup races.

The Minimax driver led early in race one but slid off at Clark on lap two, dropping to 10th by the end as Neil Hose took his maiden victory.

Little took the second race after an assertive pass on Hose at Duffus, as Weddell fought through to finish third.

Dylan O'Donnell claimed the reversed-grid final race ahead of Weddell, with Craig Blake completing the podium.

Steven Gray left Knockhill with a large Fiesta ST Cup points lead after a miserable weekend for defending champion Dave Colville, who slid out of each race at Clarks in almost identical circumstances.

John Kinmond took his Rover 3500 to a pair of Classics victories and with it, the points lead as Bruce Mitchell (Lotus Europa) uncharacteristically spun out of the second race. Oly Mortimer starred as he took his Ford Fiesta to a superb overall second and third.

Paul Luti and Dan Martin shared the spoils in another pair of entertaining C1 Cup races, with SMRC esports champion Sam Corson showing yet more promise with two third-place finishes.

Photo: Jim Moir

Gronkowski's unbeaten

RACE WINNERS

Scottish Formula Ford 1600
Race 1: Jordan Gronkowski (Van Diemen);
Race 2: Neil Maclennan (Ray GR18)

Scottish Classic Sports & Saloons
Race 1 & 2: John Kinmond (Rover 3500)

Scottish Mini Cooper Cup
Race 1: Neil Hose;
Race 2: Chad Little;
Race 3: Dylan O'Donnell

Scottish Mini R53 Cup
Race 1 & 2: Jamie Blake

Scottish Fiesta ST Cup
Race 1 & 2: Steven Gray

Scottish C1 Cup
Race 1: Paul Luti; **Race 2:** Dan Martin

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

COLUMNIST

PAUL ONSLOW-COLE

The father of racer Tom Onslow-Cole pays tribute to Rob Foote, the marshal tragically killed at Brands Hatch 10 days ago

Photos: Paul Onslow-Cole, Mike Hills Speed Images, Gary Hawkins

Respects were paid at the BTCC

I had the pleasure of knowing Rob Foote, who was a very proud Bristolian, for the last 15 years or so. He was a motorsport fanatic, pilot, engineer, former mayor and charity fundraiser. Rob's life may not have been long enough, but he certainly filled it.

We first came to meet him when he was running his own car repair business from home and we carried out his MOTs. Within a year he decided to become a tester himself and joined us as part of our growing team.

It quickly became apparent that Rob always prided himself in doing everything to the best of his ability and we soon came to know him as the person who did everything to the highest degree.

He was a fantastic engineer, which came from his days serving in his younger years with Rolls-Royce, and he spent his spare time restoring motorbikes and building his own Caterham kit car. We were privileged enough to see his Caterham once a year when he would bring it in to our Just The Ticket firm for its annual test. Over the years, our general manager Dave became close to Rob. So close, in fact, that Dave became the only other person at the time to have had the honour of taking it for a drive, an accolade that Dave still holds dearly to his heart.

Rob's love for machines didn't stop at cars and bikes. He held a Private Pilot's Licence and had many adventures around the country taking in the views of great outdoors, which he loved greatly. When not observing nature from above, he was a keen walker and owned two caravans, which he would take all over the UK to explore the countryside.

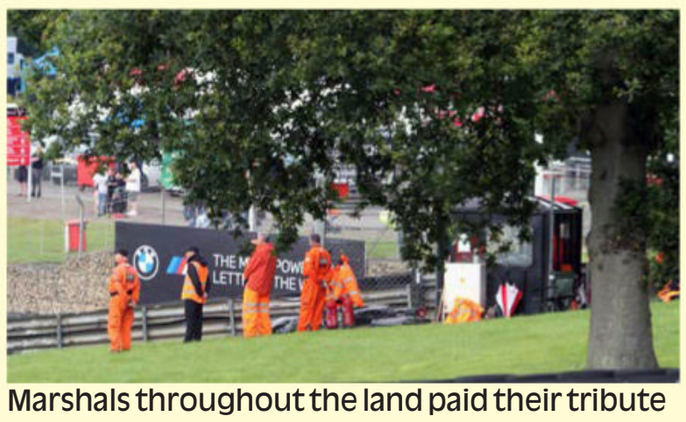
He combined his love of travelling the UK with his passion for motorsport and would regularly be found either scrutineering or marshalling in all sorts of motoring events around the country.

One of the last conversations I had with him was the week after the Goodwood Festival of Speed. He had been marshalling all week and laughed as he told me how he was utterly exhausted because, every time there was an incident on track, he had to haul himself over the huge hay bales, over which he could barely see over...

As well as volunteering in motorsport, he also gave a great deal to his local community. In 2014 he became Mayor of Epsom and, as well as this role, raised significant sums for charity, resulting in him receiving an invite to a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

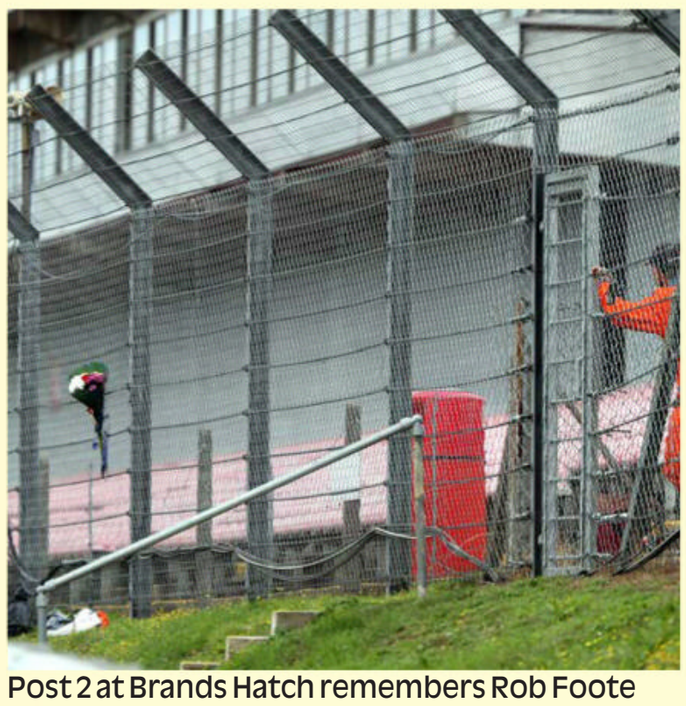
His final charitable event was perhaps the most heartfelt. After nursing his wife, who passed away in December, he had just started to get his life back together and was in the planning stages of taking part in the Scottish 500 [coastal route around the country] to raise money in her memory, as it was something they had always wanted to do together.

Like so many marshals who make our sport happen, Rob was a passionate man who took pleasure in life and delighted in making the world a better place for those around him. He will be greatly missed by so many but remembered so incredibly fondly.



Marshals throughout the land paid their tribute

Foote was a public servant as mayor of Epsom



Post 2 at Brands Hatch remembers Rob Foote

"Rob was a passionate man who delighted in making the world better"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

In this MN, Matt James looks at the British Touring Car Championship's visits to Knockhill since the category first ventured to the Fife track in 1992.

YouTube also has plenty of exciting British tin-top footage from over this time at Scotland's claustrophobic and spectacular circuit, but for our purposes we'll focus on the height of BTCC's Super Touring era in 1995.

For our viewing pleasure we have the second race of Knockhill's double-header, and for those of a certain age it'll be familiar as BBC Grandstand's highlights round-up complete with Murray Walker commentary.

The Scottish weather incongruously behaves itself and, given this is Super Touring's peak, there's a never-ending supply of competing manufacturers and well-known drivers. Also, given this is BTCC, there's plenty of rubbing-is-racing action for the packed fans on the banks.

Among the highlights, look out for Johnny Cecotto's rather circumspect exit of the gravel trap after a spin, for which he was generously applauded by the crowd. In among it all Walker, noting the BMW's James Bond GoldenEye film sponsor decals, in inimitable Murray-speak exclaims that "even 007 would find this a tough assignment".

You can watch the whole thing at youtube.com/watch?v=kK5VSKsHqIM or by searching for 'BTCC Knockhill 1995'.

Graham Keilloh

The BTCC pack always thrills in Scotland

TV GUIDE

On a busy motorsport weekend, there are a few second chances to watch action if you can't catch it live. For the World Rally Championship's inaugural Ypres visit the best of Friday's day one is shown first thing on Saturday at 0030hrs-0100hrs on BT Sport 3; Saturday's best bits are at 2230hrs-2300hrs that day on BT Sport 1 while the best of the concluding Sunday is shown in Monday's small hours at 0000hrs-0030hrs on BT Sport 1.

As for Formula E's Berlin season-concluding double header, race one highlights are at 2000hrs-2100hrs on Eurosport 2 on Saturday, and is repeated several times later that day plus early on Sunday. Race two's best bits are shown on Sunday, again at 2000hrs-2100hrs on Eurosport 2 and also get repeated later.

As for last weekend's stuff, later today (Thursday) you can check out DTM's Zolder fare on BT Sport 1 at 1330hrs-1430hrs, while at 1100hrs-1200hrs on Saturday on Sky Sports F1 there's British GT's Snetterton double header. Both also are repeated.

While for something a little different, tech fans among you can watch a programme later today on the Goodwood Future Lab from the recent Festival of Speed at 1900hrs-2000hrs on ITV4.

Graham Keilloh

Ypres hosts the WRC

LIVE TV

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP YPRES
SS10: Saturday, 0900hrs-1000hrs, BT Sport/ESPN
SS14: Saturday, 1400hrs-1500hrs, BT Sport/ESPN
SS18: Sunday, 0800hrs-0900hrs, BT Sport 1
SS20: Sunday, 1100hrs-1230hrs, BT Sport 1

FORMULA E BERLIN
Qualifying 1: 0845hrs-1020hrs, Eurosport 2
Race 1: Saturday, 1230hrs-1435hrs, Eurosport 2
Qualifying 2: Sunday, 1015hrs-1150hrs, Eurosport 2
Race 2: Sunday, 1400hrs-1600hrs, BBC Two; 1400hrs-1605hrs, Eurosport 2

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP KNOCKHILL
Races and supports: 1115hrs-1815hrs, ITV4

INDYCAR INDIANAPOLIS ROAD COURSE
Practice: Friday, 2000hrs-2100hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Saturday, 0000hrs-0100hrs, Sky Sports F1
Race: Saturday, 1730hrs-2030hrs, Sky Sports F1

NASCAR INDIANAPOLIS ROAD COURSE
Race: Sunday, 1730hrs-2130hrs, Premier Sports 2

LISTINGS

SATURDAY

Oulton Park, Cheshire
BRSCC meeting: Modified Ford, CityCar Cup, Fun Cup **Starts** racing from 1125hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

Knockhill, Fife
BTCC meeting: BTCC, F4, Carrera Cup, Ginetta GT4, Ginetta Junior, Mini Challenge **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1200hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1000hrs **Admission** adult £35, **Web** knockhill.com

Silverstone, Northants
MSVR meeting: GB3, GT Cup, Porsche Cup, MSV Super Cup, Radical Challenge, Radical SR1, Monoposto, Toyo Tyres 7s **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1220hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1050hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** £15 **Web** silverstone.co.uk

Snetterton, Norfolk
CSCC meeting: Tin Tops, Swinging Sixties, Future Classics, Magnificent 7s, Modern Classics, Special Saloon and Modsports, Classic K, New Millennium, Open Series, Turbo Tin Tops, Slicks Series **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1305hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1320hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

SUNDAY

Brands Hatch, Kent
Festival Italia: Ferrari Club, Ferrari Classic, Alfa Romeo, Classic Alfas **Starts** racing from 1240hrs (qualifying from 1000hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

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Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Gary Hill captured this Rover in flight at Brands Hatch

David Harbey was at The Classic meet

Minis, Minis everywhere: by Peter Atkins

Sam Nudd braved the Snetterton rain

Touring car battlers, from Rich Cranston

NEXT WEEK — OUT THURSDAY, AUGUST 19

*Correct at time of going to press

THE BTCC CROSSES THE BORDER

A full report as the British Touring Car Championship heads to Knockhill

CAN ELFYN GET THE TITLE BALL ROLLING AGAIN?

Ypres plays host to its first World Rally Championship round

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Any advertisement received too late for publication and any advertisement received too late for inclusion in the current issue will automatically be inserted in the next available issue.

If you are a trade advertiser this must be indicated in your advertisement. Advertisers are also reminded that they are responsible for complying with legal requirements currently in force.
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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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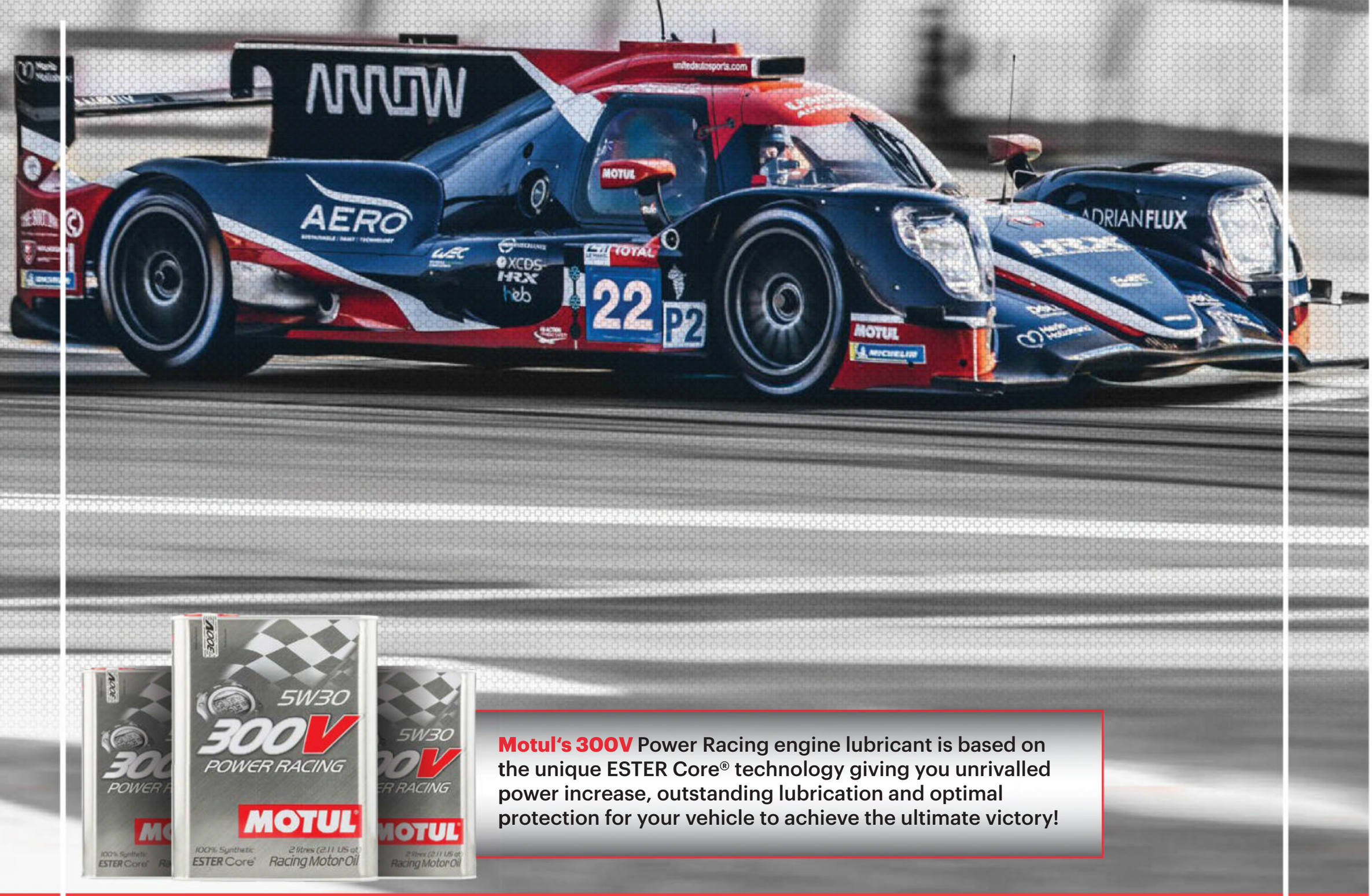

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